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An Unconventional Novel.

IN FETTERS:

THE MAN OR THE PRIEST?

BY
THOMAS KIRWAN.

BOSTON:
DE WOLFE, FISKE & CO., PUBLISHERS.

1893.

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INTRODUCTORY.

I have called my novel an unconventional one, for the reason that it will probably not interest the ordinary novel reader—the devourer of those works of fiction which rise but little above the level of mere family or village gossip, but which in some cases may contain certain good ideas—mostly unvirile ones, however—though, as a matter of fact, they generally pander to the abnormal longings or sensuous appetites of the class of readers for which they are written.

This work is not for such frivolous minds, but for thoughtful people, who are accustomed to regard life more as a drama than as a comedy or a farce. It calls for the exercise of the thinking faculty, and will be of interest to earnest people, who have often paused in the whirl and turmoil, in the disappointment and the worry, of life, and have soberly asked themselves such questions as these:

What is the world in which we live, and what is its relation to the universe?

What is life, and especially human life?

What are we here for?

What is our mission?—have we any?—and what is our destiny?

This work does not profess to answer these questions from any supernal source of information or inspirational standpoint. It simply aims to express the common thought of the intelligent people of this age, who dare to think for themselves, in protest against the old beliefs and forms of religion which claim special divinity of origin and authority, and to help such free thinkers in the consideration of the problems of life. In doing this it will illustrate in a manner the travail of inquiry, of discussion, and of earnest, honest, and intelligent thought in the direction whence these questions tend.

In this book, though one creed is chosen as an illustration of the power of the Christian church over men's lives and conduct, the purpose is to treat all existing creeds and beliefs as survivals of primitive ignorance and its consequent development of that imaginative faculty which has entered so largely—and perhaps legitimately—into the psychological constitution of humanity.

It will be observed that most of my characters are honorable and high-minded people, as the world goes; with peculiar views of life, if they have any; some personal oddities, perhaps, but mostly acting according to the best light and intelligence which they have—meaning to do right, in their way.

I have a constitutional aversion to the common villain of the ordinary novel or drama. In my opinion, if goodness and uprightness of character cannot be made striking except by contrast with criminal depravity—that is, if it cannot shine by its own light—it amounts to but little. I have never found the conventional villain in real life, though undoubtedly there are vain and even

wicked men to be found on occasion; but, outside the criminal classes, there are no such men as we see painted in novels and exaggerated on the stage, and, in my opinion, the sooner we rid our literature of them the better. I confess to a dislike to such people, or rather caricatures of people; have never studied their peculiarities, and would consider it in as bad taste to introduce them to my readers as I would to present a man whom I knew to be a professional thief to a friend.

My characters are intended to be natural, and to act like the common run of people, who are experimental in thought if not in act; who are, in fact, seeking, like most people, to make the best of life.

In regard to the discussion of religious matters—so called—I aim to present the thoughts of people who reason about them in perhaps a somewhat crude, but at the same time logical, way. Without knowing anything about the rules of inductive philosophy, they yet—like the person who can write good and even elegant English without knowing the rules of grammar—reason from analogical bases to sensible deductions.

It is a common error for people in opposition to regard one another with suspicion, as being insincere, dishonest, and vicious. This I conceive to be not the right method. The man who honestly doubts the divinity of Christ or the inspiration of the Scriptures may be, and usually is, quite as honest, sincere, and virtuous as the man who believes firmly in both. The fact is, we are what we are by reason of the conditions which environ our lives. These may impel us to be saints or sinners, according to what they are and the material which we furnish them with.

The growing tendency of the present age, so far as I can judge, is to regard religion as the best expression of the highest social development, rather than as being derived from some source or influence outside of and apart from humanity. Whatever 'authority' there may be in the churches of the present day, or of any and all ages, may be regarded as a thing having its origin in humanity itself, and, therefore, that all church regulation should be based on the authority whence it emanates — that of the people constituting the churches. This is democratic doctrine in politics — why not in religion?

THOMAS KIRWAN.

Boston, Mass., June, 1893.

IN FETTERS:

THE MAN OR THE PRIEST?

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCING SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS—THE YOUTH, THE MAIDEN, THE UNRELENTING FATHER.

The scene of this opening chapter is laid in a maritime town in one of the eastern provinces of the Dominion of Canada, but at the time this narrative begins—viz., 1849—a separate province. We shall call the town Chebucto. This place was and is an agricultural centre, and being situated on a strait in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, with a fairly good harbor, enjoyed a moderate share of commerce. Among its earlier industries was that of shipbuilding, which at one time had been carried on to a considerable extent, but at the time in question only two men were engaged in it, their building yards adjoining on the water front. These men kept extensive supply stores, and were, in many respects, rivals in business.

Their names were James Warden and Richard Gaston. They were both quite wealthy for that section of country, and were doing a large and profitable business, not only in shipbuilding but in merchandise. They each owned

several ships, which in the fall they loaded with oats, and sent to England, the ships on return bringing merchandise, machinery, etc. When not engaged in this business of exchange, these vessels traded to any place where they could obtain charter, or carried loads of deals to England.

James Warden, as the name would indicate, was an Englishman, and in religion a Roman Catholic. Richard Gaston was of French descent, and also a Roman Catholic.

The latter had taken for wife an Irish woman, whose principal attributes were piety, affection, and goodness of heart. She had little education, but any one knowing her would forget this lack in the real respect she inspired by her sincerity, sweetness of disposition, and genuine good nature.

Curiously enough James Warden had for wife a woman of French descent, her maiden name Marie Laroche, who was a fine specimen of her race. She had been educated in a convent, and was intelligent, vivacious, and, what is rare in these modern days, an obedient and dutiful wife. Indeed her husband's wish or will was a thing she never dreamed of disputing. This couple had an only child, a daughter named Agnes, who at the time this story opens was eighteen years of age. She was tall, straight as an arrow, with a well-developed form, and the face of an Evangeline—beautiful, but with a pensive expression in it. Richard Gaston had two sons, Thomas and Richard. The former, at the time our tale begins, was twenty-four years of age, and had then been some two years in 'the States,'—at Boston, in fact,—pursuing his studies. Richard, who was now twenty-two, decided to remain at home—though offered a college course—preferring a business career to a professional one.

He was a tall, manly fellow, with a wealth of curly chestnut hair, covering the head of an Apollo. He had received a fairly good academy education, and was quick and intelligent in business matters. He was earnest, honest, sincere, and was withal blest with a bright, sunny disposition that sought only cheerfulness. His mother, Mrs. Gaston, had often importuned Richard to go to college and study for the priesthood. 'We've had priests in our family,' she said — she was a Brady — 'for ages, and it would be the glory of my soul to see one of my sons in that most holy order of Christ's disciples.' But the son invariably shook his head and replied: 'Mother, I am not cut out for the church. I am not good enough. My desires and my ambition are all too worldly. Try Tom.'

The fact was that Richard Gaston had in view a secular life, in the business of which Agnes Warden was to be the partner. He had known Agnes from her infancy and had always loved her.

His father and her's had formerly been warm friends, but that friendship had been broken for some years, and while he had not formally forbidden the visits of Richard Gaston to his house, Mr. Warden looked upon them with growing disfavor. The former's visits to Agnes were of almost daily occurrence, and these usually in the summer season ended in an evening stroll along the street leading by the water side out to a hill or cliff overlooking the sea, where the lovers, seated on a boulder, would talk of the future and lay plans, as lovers often do, plans never to be realized.

It was a Saturday evening in August. The day was unusually warm, but the evening brought in the cool and refreshing sea breeze, which made existence once more

an enjoyment. Richard went, as usual in the evening to see Agnes, and invite her out to enjoy the evening air. She donned her bonnet and shawl, and the two lovers walked slowly toward their trysting place. But Agnes, during this walk, was unusually silent, or only answered Richard's vivacious questions and talk in monosyllables or with a sad smile on her face.

He noticed this unusual preoccupation and was puzzled to comprehend it, for though never demonstrative, Agnes was usually frank and cheerful, and seemed to enjoy every moment of the time spent in her lover's company. But he made no remark about it until the trysting place was reached, where, after seating themselves, he said:

‘Agnes, you seem sad tonight. Has anything happened to make you unhappy? Have I—’

Instead of replying, Agnes burst into tears.

‘Why — what is it, dear girl? Speak to me?’

With an effort she calmed herself, and said:

‘Richard — Dick — I am afraid that there is going to be trouble for us. Mother tells me that father has threatened to forbid your coming to the house, and also to forbid me to keep company with you any longer.’

‘What have I done to merit his displeasure, Agnes?’

‘Nothing. It is simply on account of his unfriendliness to your father. I understand that they had some hot words today — this forenoon — and at dinner time father told mother that he would never have a Gaston in his family, which means — oh, you know what it means to us, Dick!’

‘But shall I be treated as an enemy because my father is so regarded by your’s? Are we to share our parents’ dislikes and prejudices? This would be as senseless as

it would be wicked. It is monstrous! It would be like going back to the savage usages of barbarous ages.'

'My father is a very determined man, Dick, and when he makes up his mind to do a thing he will do it. He may at any moment forbid me to see you again as a lover.'

'And would you obey such a command?'

'I would be bound to. He is my father, and has the right to command my obedience.'

'Would you not leave your home for my love? I can offer you as good a home as the one you would leave.'

Her breast heaved with a fierce conflict of feeling. He watched her closely, and with an anxious, beating heart awaited her decision. She was like one tempest-tossed in a sea of emotion, and could not speak. In the hope to urge a favorable decision he said:

'Agnes, my love, do not for God's sake decide against me! Let me see your father, and try if I cannot soften him. At least let us wait until he actually forbids you to keep company with me.'

She heaved a sigh of relief and said, simply, 'I will,' and the despondent and now-silent lovers took their way homeward, and parted with a whispered 'good-bye.'

The following day — Sunday — the sun rose in a clear sky, and all things in nature seemed to feel the inspiration of its glowing influence. As the time for attendance at church drew near, Richard Gaston, as was his custom, stationed himself at a point on the route of the Wardens churchward — they usually walked, as did the other villagers. It was at this place, under the eye of her parents, that it was his wont to meet her and walk with her after them to the church, which was about a quarter of a mile distant, on the highest elevation in the town.

He had not been at his post more than five minutes when the Wardens came along. As they approached him Richard raised his hat, and bade them a respectful 'good morning.' To his astonishment his salutation was not noticed by Mr. Warden or his wife, though the latter looked pityingly at the young man, as if she longed to say a kind word to him but dared not, while Agnes, instead of falling to the rear to join him, kept her place between her father and mother. But her eyes told him plainly that her position and refusal to accompany him were not of her own choice, and he fancied he could see tears in them.

The blow had come sooner than he expected, and he reeled under it as if it were a stunning physical infliction. For a moment his head swam around, and he staggered to the fence, where he supported himself, his head drooping on his arm. In this position Mrs. Warden, who had a woman's curiosity to look back as they turned up the street to the church, saw him, and her heart was smote with pity for the young man, but she made no remark, and went forward to church.

Richard Gaston had pride as well as feeling, and after the first effects of the shock had passed away, this pride took possession of him, and he said to himself: 'Why should I be cast down by this unjust and undeserved treatment from a man I have never wronged, and have always treated with respect? I will show him that I am not a lout to cry and act like a fool because he refuses to let his daughter walk with me. I will show them all that I am not cast down!' and straightening himself up he started for the church by a short cut, and arrived there before the Wardens, who kept on the street. He was not

aware that Mrs. Warden had seen his despairing attitude beside the fence.

The Warden and Gaston families, being the wealthiest people in the town, had the two front pews. Agnes, however, who had a fine soprano voice, sang in the choir, and Richard was also a member, singing a tenor part. This day, however, instead of going up to the gallery where the choir was located, he took a seat in his father's pew, and there, much to their surprise—especially to that of Mrs. Warden—the Wardens found him seated when they reached their pew.

Services over, young Gaston was among the first to leave the church. He went out into the bye streets, to commune in solitude with his thoughts. He had a hard struggle between love and pride. Love so far conquered that he determined to ask his mother's advice, and, if she would consent, have her in some way intercede for him, though he could not see how she would be able to afford him any assistance; but a frantic lover, like a drowning man, will grasp at straws.

He returned home, and after dinner, of which he ate but little, he beckoned to his mother, and whispered that he wanted to have a private talk with her. She took him to her room, where he told her all that had taken place, even to the repulse of that morning.

'I wondered,' she said, 'why you did not go up to the choir today, and this accounts for it. Dick, my dear boy, I pity you; but I do not see how I can help you so long as your father and Mr. Warden are bad friends. I think we'd better call your father in and tell him all. He is quick tempered, I know, and may have been outspoken to Warden, who has been using very mean artifices to

take trade from our store. Your father loves you, my son, and would I am sure make any sacrifice to secure your happiness.'

Mr. Gaston was then called in, and made acquainted with the condition of affairs. He was a sensible, honorable man, but of high spirit and quick temper. He had an affectionate nature, and loved his sons so strongly that he was prepared to assist them in all proper ways; but if he loved one better than the other it was Richard.

When he heard it all, he paused for a while, in deep thought. Then he said:

'Dick, my boy, I regret that your affair with Agnes has gone so far, though she is a grand good girl, worthy to be wife of the best man in the province. I would be glad to see her your wife, and both of you settled for life. I would also like to be once again friendly with James Warden, and would willingly let bygones be bygones, for both your sakes; but I know enough of human nature as it is exemplified in that man to feel that this can never be. When a man injures you, you may forgive him — but will he forgive you? Warden will not forgive me because he has injured me; that is now the trouble.'

'Father,' said Richard, 'I understand your point. If he were a true Christian he'd forgive; but as he's not the injured party he will not. But he is doubly mean in thus extending his enmity to me, to wreck my life.'

'Dick,' said his mother, 'are you so set upon having Agnes that you cannot give her up? There are other good girls in Chebucto that you might have for the —'

'Mother,' he interrupted, 'if I cannot have Agnes, I will have no other woman — I will never marry!' He said this sadly, but in a tone of determination.

‘Well, Dick, if you don’t get her, and will not marry, why can’t you’—

‘Stop,’ said the elder Gaston, who divined that she was going to revive the idea of his becoming a priest. ‘It will be time enough to talk of that later on, for, as you both know, I do not favor such a step. I have a good business, which Dick understands thoroughly, and which he can have when I’m called away. Tom has no head for business, and if Dick should go away, he could not be induced to leave Boston and come home to the uneventful life of this quiet village. On the other hand Dick is just suited for this life, and could be happy here if he would be contented. Well, we shall see what may be done. What do you now propose to do in the matter?’ he asked, turning to Richard.

‘My impulse is to see Mr. Warden and ask him for Agnes—to plead with him for her, if need be.’

‘I fear he will only insult you. But, as it will bring matters to a focus, perhaps it is the best thing you can do. Let me advise you, however, not to lose your temper, even if he should insult you. The man who loses his temper is always at the mercy of his opponent. Besides, his age, if nothing more, calls for your respect. Talk plainly to him, but not offensively, and no matter what he says to you, leave him with a respectful, unruffled demeanor.’

‘It may be a hard thing to do, if he is abusive—and especially if he should begin to abuse you, father—but I will treat him with respect, for Agnes’ sake as well as your sake and my own dignity,’ said Richard, and thus the conference ended.

CHAPTER II.

THE INTERVIEW WITH MR. WARDEN.—‘AGNES CAN NEVER BE YOUR WIFE!’—‘MOTHER, I AM READY!’

The morning succeeding the events narrated, Richard Gaston entered the store of James Warden. The latter saw him coming, and went into his private office. He no doubt guessed the purpose of this visit, and wished it to be private.

Ascertaining that the merchant was in his office, the young man knocked, and in response to the ‘come in’ of the occupant, entered. He was agitated, but once inside, and noting the cold and even contemptuous look which answered his respectful salutation, his native coolness of manner came to his aid like an inspiration, and he stood before Mr. Warden as self-possessed as if his errand were one of ordinary every-day business.

‘Mr. Warden,’ he said, ‘I come to have some private talk with you about a matter which deeply concerns me as well as one who is dear to you.’

‘Indeed! And pray how do you know that it deeply concerns the one you speak of?’ asked the merchant, with a sneer.

‘Pardon me, sir,’ said the young man, ‘but I think I have good reason for that statement. However, I have not come to enter into any controversy. All I ask of you is a patient and friendly hearing, which I think a long acquaintance with me and a full knowledge of my character and habits—I have grown from a child under your eye, sir—warrant me in expecting from you.’

The merchant made no reply, and Richard, accepting this as an assent, in a manly and straightforward manner told the tale of his love and courtship of Agnes, a courtship which had been carried on with the knowledge and tacit consent of both her parents as well as of his, and pleaded eloquently that as they loved one another it would be cruel to separate them.

Mr. Warden, who was an imperious man, did hear him through, much to his own surprise; but, when the young man concluded, he said, in a harsh tone:

‘After this fine talk, I suppose you want my decision?’

‘I do, sir.’

‘You shall have it without equivocation: Agnes can never be your wife!’

‘Sir — Mr. Warden — can you mean this?’

‘I do mean it — so make up your mind to accept it as a final answer.’

‘Have I ever said or done aught to offend you, sir?’

‘You have not; but your father has, and one of his blood shall never mingle with my race, if I can help it.’

The blood mounted to Richard’s brow, and then the flush was succeeded by a deathlike paleness. But though his emotions were almost overpowering, he mastered them. Then, he said, looking full in Warden’s eye:

‘Sir, your unjust determination may wreck one if not two lives — God forgive you!’ and turning on his heel he rapidly left the place.

As he passed up the street towards his father’s place of business he encountered Agnes, who was on the watch to learn of the result of his mission. She saw by the expression of his face that her father had rejected and perhaps insulted him.

‘Dick—Mr. Gaston—I know by your face that my father has refused you. O God! what shall I say or do?’

‘He not only told me that you can never be my wife, but insulted me through his enmity to my father.’

‘I hope you said nothing in anger to him, in return,’ said Agnes.

‘I said nothing worse than that he had wrecked one if not two lives by his decision, and that I hoped God would forgive him for it.’

‘That was noble, Richard. Ah me! what shall become of me? We must part, Richard. While my father lives he will never consent to our union. I know him well enough for that. Try and forget me, Richard. There are others—’

‘None for me, Agnes,’ was the passionate exclamation. ‘If I cannot have you, I want no other woman for wife. But, Agnes,’ and here his voice assumed a pleading tone, ‘can you not decide for yourself, as it most concerns you? If we should get married your father would in time forgive you—’

‘Never—never! O, Dick, I know him too well to hope for such a thing. He would curse me while living and on his dying bed, and I could never be happy under such conditions. It is out of the question.’

‘Then you would give up your love and hope of life at the behest of an angry and unforgiving parent. Agnes, think well what you are deciding.’

‘I have thought it all over, Dick, and have spent two sleepless and tearful nights thinking of it. My resolution is taken: I cannot marry you against my father’s wishes.’

‘This is your final decision, then? Is there no hope of your changing it?’

‘None, Dick, none,’ she said, sadly. ‘I have some of my father’s dogged nature in me, I suppose. At any rate I will not marry without his consent, or during his lifetime.’ Her voice quivered with emotion, though she managed to maintain an outwardly calm demeanor.

He took both her hands in his, and wringing them, said: ‘Agnes, you’re an angel! God bless you, and God help us both to bear the burden of life, made heavy to us by no fault of our’s!’ He turned away from her, and, instead of going to his father’s store, started in the direction of his home.

His mother saw his approach, and stood in the doorway to meet him. She read his disappointment in his face, and led him into the sitting room.

‘My poor boy!’ she said, ‘I see that you have met with a refusal, and I have no doubt it was a cruel one.’

‘It was cold and cruel, mother,’ he sobbed, his head on her breast.

‘Well, it may not be so bad, after all. Agnes may brave his wrath, and—’

‘No hope for that, mother. I saw her after the interview, and urged her to take that step, but she positively refused. She said she would never marry without her father’s consent, and she knew he would never consent to our union while he lived. Her decision is irrevocable.’

Richard, after the paroxysm of his emotion had spent itself, arose and paced the floor for a minute or two. Then he approached his mother and said:

‘Mother, I am ready!’

She divined his meaning, but instead of feeling rejoiced at his decision, a pang shot through her heart, and she could not find words to reply.

‘I will go to college, mother, and become a priest!’

‘O, Richard!’ was all she could say, and then, as if realizing that perhaps it was the best thing he could do under the circumstance, rose and embraced him, saying, fervently:

‘God bless you, my son. The holy profession of the priesthood will not only enable you to aid and comfort those who are unhappy like yourself, but will bring you happiness in time by making you forget your own troubles. The church will open to you a new world of thought and effort, give you a noble work to do in this life, and a happy reward in the next.’

When Mr. Gaston learned of his son’s determination he was far from pleased. ‘Dick,’ he said, ‘you are more fitted for business than for the priesthood. You have a business head, but not a priestly one. What I mean is, you can be more benefit to the world as a merchant or a manufacturer than as a priest. You have brains — a priest needs none, or next to none. You have a capacity for social enjoyment, while a priest looks mostly to the enjoyment of eating and drinking. You are too acute a reasoner, I think, to believe what you do not understand, and too conscientious to teach what you do not believe. I don’t say that priests do this, as a rule, but my impression is that many of them do. A priest, unless he be a really able and honest man, would better be a nonentity — a mere dealer in the ritual matters pertaining to religion; one who will obey his superiors without question, and get along as smoothly as he can.’

‘You do not seem to have a high opinion of churchmen, father, and you may be right from your standpoint. But circumstances have impelled me to make this choice,

and perhaps it is as good as any other. You will admit that, after what has just occurred, I cannot remain here. I might go to Boston, where Tom is, and become like him, a free thinker.⁴ How would you like that, father?’

‘I would rather see you a free thinker and an honest man than a cardinal and a hypocrite, Dick; though I have faith in you to believe that you will never profess one thing while you believe in another. Your brother Tom, I am sorry to say, has left the faith of his fathers, but he is honest and truthful, and these are qualities which I believe to be essential to true manhood. However, as you say, you cannot remain here, for a time at least, after what has occurred. If your wooing had resulted differently, I intended taking you into partnership. A year’s absence at college may bring a change in your feeling, and perhaps you would better take a course. Where do you desire to go — to what college?’

‘As I have made up my mind to study for the priesthood, I would like to go to the Jesuit college at Montreal.’

‘Very well. Be it as you wish; only promise me this: that you will not seek for ordination until you are perfectly sure you shall like the new profession.’

‘I will promise that,’ was the response, and thus the interview ended.

Preparations for the departure of Richard Gaston for college were soon completed, and as it was but a short time until the opening of the fall term, he tried to forget his present troubles in assisting his father in putting the account books of the business into good shape.

Richard had been a steady young man, and saving of the salary allowed him by his father, so he had money enough of his own to bear his college expenses, and even

more. Then he had been given a small interest in two of the ships recently built by his father, and as these had been sold in the English market at good prices, there was an amount of some six hundred and fifty pounds sterling which he would get when the money was received from the old country.

The sudden determination of Richard Gaston to give up the succession to his father's business and become a priest, together with the cause of this change, were not long in finding their way to the gossips of the town, and of course set their tongues wagging. But of this he knew little or nothing, and cared less.

During the time intervening between the formation of his resolution and his departure for college, Richard saw nothing of the Wardens; but he met the young people of the other families of the village, and on the eve of his departure most of them, together with their parents, called upon him to wish him God-speed; for, though more sedate than the general run of young men, there was nothing 'stuck up' about him, and he was popular with both old and young.

The day of departure came. The stage coach stopped at the door of the Gaston house to take him away, and while the driver was putting on the trunks, Richard was in the sitting room with his father and mother saying parting words and receiving advice and encouragement. When the announcement came that all was ready for the start, his mother put her arms about him, and after embracing and kissing him affectionately, said:

'God in his goodness bless you my dear son and make you an ornament to the church and a pride to your parents!'

His father kissed him affectionately and said :

‘Write often, Dick, and let me know not only how you are progressing, but how you are feeling in the new path which you have chosen. Good bye, and God bless you!’

Richard wrung the hands of his parents, and with an affectionate adieu, mingled with tears, he rushed out of the home of his childhood and mounted the stage coach, which started off at a lively pace. He saw an unusual number of his young friends on the street, all of whom shouted or waved him an adieu, and when he looked back to the old home, he there saw his father and mother at the door, watching him out of sight, the latter waving him adieu with her handkerchief.

CHAPTER III.

PEDAGOGUE CLUNEY AND TOM GASTON. — TOM’S VIEWS
ON RELIGION, AND GROWING SCEPTICISM.

John Cluney was a bachelor, a gentleman and a scholar. He was about forty years of age at the time our story begins. He was nephew of Father Tom McMahon parish priest of Chebucto, and second master of the Chebucto Academy—now a college—and taught mathematics, philosophy, Latin and Greek, and other advanced studies of a high or normal school.

Master Cluney would be counted a fair-looking man, even though he had red hair and plain features, if his eyes were not set obliquely in his head. Both were

askew, and inclined inward, so that when he looked at any object, he had to focus them on it. In reading, he held the book so that the lines were nearly perpendicular. This peculiarity of vision was quite noticeable on first acquaintance, and indeed was difficult to overcome on closer acquaintance.

But if John Cluney was not prepossessing in appearance, he was a man to be esteemed and respected on acquaintance. He was a fine scholar, and a man of brains and culture far above his surroundings. He loved books and was a great reader — an omnivorous one, indeed, for nothing in the way of literature came amiss to him.

He was of Irish birth and education, like his uncle, the priest, and his speech had a certain virility of articulation which might be called rough, but you would soon forget this and even see in it a fitness for expressing the sturdy masculine thoughts of the speaker. He was an earnest man, and rarely indulged in trifling talk, though, on occasion, he would perpetrate a pun, and chuckle over it.

Perhaps it was for this reason, added to his peculiar appearance that he did not shine in female society. Perhaps, also, his great love of books and of study made him prefer such companionship to the company of the young ladies of the town, few of whom were highly educated and fewer still possessed any literary taste.

As a pedagogue, John Cluney was a success. He was a strict disciplinarian in school — a hard master to boys who tried to shirk their tasks or were dull. He called them ‘dolts.’ To the boys who took an interest in their work he was kind, sympathetic and helpful.

With such qualities it was no wonder that, notwithstanding his peculiarities, he commanded the respect and

even love of his pupils; for even the 'dolts' could see that his severity was exercised for their benefit.

One of Master Cluney's favorite pupils was Thomas Gaston — Tom, he called him. Tom's ambition, like that of many another smart young provincial, had led him, a year and a half before the opening of our story, to go to Boston, that Mecca of all downeasters, to study for the profession of medicine. After a preparatory course, he entered the medical department of Harvard College, which was then, and for some years later, located on Grove street, and among whose preceptors was Prof. John W. Webster, whose murder of Dr. George Parkman on Nov. 23, 1849, caused such a profound sensation throughout New England, and for which the professor was hanged on the 20th of August following.

While pursuing his medical studies in Boston, Tom Gaston maintained a regular and not infrequent correspondence with his old preceptor, who in turn was prompt in reply and quite generous in the amount of his matter. Tom Gaston was frankness itself in his communications to his friend.

His letters were a faithful chart of the development of his mind, especially on matters pertaining to religion.

Like most young men who are 'born into' a mode of religious belief, he was restless at the restraint enjoined against free inquiry about matters of belief and of religious doctrine. The reason given as to why he should not question the absolute right of the Catholic church to decide on all matters of faith — that he should not set up his own judgement against the decisions or dicta of the church — was not satisfying to him.

Then he could not admit the sense or justice of the

condemnation of other Christian sects by the church, nor could he understand why a young man in all other respects like himself should be condemned because he did not believe in the Catholic church and the infallibility of the Pope, its supreme head, especially when that young man had been born of Protestant parentage, and was brought up a Protestant.

If Protestants and other sects were wrong, why did not the Omnipotent God change their hearts and turn them toward the truth as taught by the Catholic church? Again, why did God permit the predominance in numbers of pagans and Mohammedans among the peoples of the earth? If Christianity was the only saving religion, why was not the whole world inclined to Christianity? And if God was the merciful and considerate father which he was painted, and if the Catholic church was the only true Christian church, why was not the whole world Christian and all Christians Catholics?

These thoughts, which had haunted Tom Gaston during his school days in his native town, occurred to him with redoubled force and energy when he came to Boston, and found a dominant Protestantism that was full of vitality, highly intelligent, and in some respects liberal and even progressive. But he found in Boston, also, a surprising division of sentiment among Protestants. He found the orthodox and other so-called evangelical Christians to be as strict and almost as dogmatic in their views and pulpit teachings as the most bigoted Presbyterians of the Provinces. But then there were the Universalists, who had so far modified the doctrines of orthodoxy as to hold that all men, even the most wicked, would finally be saved. This was a step in the direction of liberalism,

but in Universalism in its more radical form Tom Gaston found religious ideas and conceptions best suited to his own conceptions of a religion, in which humanity would have some chance of fair play as against the doctrines of the theologians.

Among the noted preachers of the day in Boston—and he heard them all—none suited Tom Gaston so fully as Theodore Parker, whose humanitarian views, freedom of thought and expression, and evident sincerity, as well as the moral courage and persistency with which he iterated his generally unpopular views on theology and the rights of man, at once won the approval and admiration of the young provincial.

‘He is,’ wrote Tom Gaston to Master Cluney, discussing in one of his letters the famous preacher—‘He is a phenomenal man. Of medium build, very bald, spectacled, and with a voice at first somewhat harsh, he would not impress you as being more than a commonplace preacher. But before he talked five minutes this impression would be dispelled, and you would forget the man in the ideas he was enunciating. You would become conscious of the unfoldment, the revelation of a sublime individuality, a mind of vast power and penetration, a heart warm to the ties of common humanity, a nature that would scorn subterfuge—a man, in fact, of the heroic mould, with the strongest convictions, and the courage to express them. His indignant protests against religious intolerance are finely and consistently supplemented by his fierce denunciations of the system of human slavery prevailing today in the Southern states of this republic. This attitude of Mr. Parker, though it is consistent with his position as an advocate of human freedom, physically

as well as mentally, has made him many powerful and vindictive enemies, and threats of personal violence are not lacking to remind him that the man who is honest in his convictions and outspoken in his utterances, if he is against the established order of things, is not to be tolerated — not because he is not right, but because he seeks to do away with the evils that society has become accustomed to and grown to like.

‘You would feel a rapture in listening to this fearless man, such a rapture as can only be kindled in the human breast by the awakening of the heroic instinct in our nature, the instinct that would rouse to rebellion against the tyrant of oppression, whether he were embodied in a personal king or an impersonal creed.’

To this Master Cluney replied, ‘In regard to Theodore Parker, you excite my curiosity. He must be a phenomenal man. Is it what he says or is it the manner in which he says it, that is so taking? Does he tell any new truths, or does he clothe old ones in new and attractive garments, as the milliner will make old maids look young by artistic arrangement of dress and drapery? Seriously, Tom, let me say to you — Do not be carried away by the rhetorical methods of any speaker. Take down some of his points as he utters them, and then, in the stillness of your room, subject them to a close analysis. They may be found then to be not so enchanting as they appeared when uttered by this man, who is evidently a master of his art.

‘I do not write this to discourage you, or to lower your estimate of Mr. Parker. I simply do it to suggest to you that enthusiasm is often misleading, throwing a glamour about the mental vision and making what is

merely bright dazzling, what is merely novel astoundingly new, and platitude the dawning of a new and vital truth. Believe me, Tom, there are few things that are new in this world. Few thoughts now occur on old subjects which have not occurred before. Indeed it would seem as if every phase which religion could assume has already been manifested in some form or other, and that little that is new can be found in the churches. We must look for new ideas on religion, not in the churches, but outside of them. I will visit Boston in July or August, when I hope to see and hear your Rev. Theodore Parker, and judge for myself.'

It may be added that while Tom Gaston was open in his confidences with his old master he was more circumspect in what he wrote to his parents, for he disliked to give them pain — especially his mother — in the thought that he had repudiated the faith of his fathers. It is true he had indicated enough in his letters to his brother to give the impression that he was not a good Catholic. But as he inclined to free thought, his people did not have the mortification of the suspicion that he would become a Protestant, a thing which all Catholics would reprobate, for while they could tolerate a resort to free thinking on the part of a member of their church they would hardly forgive a change to Protestantism.

During the only visit made to his home, about a year after leaving it, Tom had friendly talk with Father McMahon, Chebucto's parish priest, with whom he was a great favorite. This was brought about by Tom's good mother, who, woman-like, conceived that a priest had, by some occult means, the power of turning him from the error of his ways.

‘Tom,’ said his reverence, ‘I am told that you have been playing fast and loose with the devil in Boston.’

‘If I have,’ said Tom, in a jocular way, ‘I was not aware of it. He was never introduced to me by that name. Would you know him, Father Tom, if you met him?’

‘I would know his works, anyway.’

‘What are they?’

‘Evil, and you know it, Tom, as well as I do.’

‘But you speak of the devil as if he were a personality, a being. Is he really such?’

‘He is the embodiment of the evil principle.’

‘Then, as I understand it, sir, the word devil is only a term which you use to embody your conception of what is understood to be the evil principle in nature?’

‘That might do for the materialistic conception of the matter.’

‘Then if the devil is only a conception of the embodiment of the evil principle in nature, and not a personality, and God is our conception of what is good in nature, is he also only a conception of the human brain, or is he a reality — I mean a personality?’

Master Cluney, who was an amused listener to this colloquy, noticing that his uncle showed signs of irritation, here interrupted with a laugh, and said: ‘Tom, you are still the same radical asker of conundrums you were when at school. Do you remember when you asked me why the water in the sea wasn’t fresh, like well water?’

‘Yes; and I recall your reply, “because it wasn’t.”’ replied Tom, smiling at the recollection.

‘And you afterwards realized that that answer was not the result of my inability to explain the phenomena con-

needed with the production of fresh and the existence of sea water?’

‘I did, of course.’

‘And can you not see the analogy between that question and the ones you are now asking?’

‘I could, if they were susceptible of demonstration, as that was.’

‘Tom, you’re incorrigible,’ said Cluney, and the subject was dismissed. At parting, however, Father Tom, quite earnestly, but yet good-naturedly, said :

‘I’m afraid, Tom, that the devil will yet claim one more good fellow in you!’

‘I shall not fear him, Father Tom,’ was the laughing reply, ‘while I can call so good and noble a churchman as you, and my dear Mr. Cluney, friends!’

‘Tom,’ rejoined the gratified and more than half mollified priest, ‘may God bless you, and make clear to your understanding the things which now seem obscure!’

‘Amen!’ said Tom; and they parted.

CHAPTER IV.

JOHN CLUNEY’S VISIT TO BOSTON—THE ‘OLD NATIONAL’ THEATRE AND ITS GALLERY GODS.

On an afternoon in August, 1851, Thomas Gaston stood at the end of Lewis wharf in Boston, watching for the St. John steamer. He had been waiting nearly two hours, when he was at last rewarded by a sight of the white hull of the steamboat rapidly making her way up

the harbor and towards the wharf where he stood. The boat had hardly touched the wharf when he jumped on board, and made his way among the passengers in search of his expected friend, Master Cluney, whom he quickly spied at the rail of the boat looking over the assembled crowd, in search of him, his head thrown back and quivering with a kind of palsied shake, that was altogether familiar.

‘Mr. Cluney!’

‘Why, it’s Tom! God bless you, Tom! You are after me, while I have been looking for you.’

Tom had provided board and lodging for his guest at his own boarding place, and after arranging with an expressman to carry the trunk of the latter which could not then be reached to the house, took a carriage, and they were soon whirling up Ann street towards the West End.

‘Tom,’ said the master, as they rode up Ann street, ‘what kind of a neighborhood is this? It looks like an old-country city street more than an American one.’

‘It is one of the toughest in the city — a resort of the lowest women and men, and a place where sailors are often cast away, as you can judge, when one portion of it is named the “black sea.”’

‘And this is Ann street. I have heard much of it and of its bad character. But, if I mistake not, it was once the residence of some of Boston’s first families.’

‘That is true. From the first families it has descended to the worst families.’

‘Tom, you are the same punster you always were, but in this case your attempt is more punitive than pungent, considering the locality and the weather. But is not

Father Taylor's Bethel in this locality, somewhere? I heard one of our sailors speak of him.'

'Yes, it is in North square, and he is a character—you must take him in; also, you must see some of the all-night dances which are held in this locality.'

'I will, Tom. I'll take them all in.'

Arrived at the boarding house, the master was accompanied to his room, which adjoined Tom's. After a good wash and an arrangement of his toilet, Master Cluney sat down with his friend and former pupil, to talk with him of home and friends, in the interval before supper time. But, first, Tom hastily read the letters for him with which his friend was freighted.

'These letters are short,' said Tom, 'but they give as a reason that you will tell me all the news, and now for it. Dick took a notion about two years ago to study for the church—a curious resolve, it would seem, if there had not been a woman in the case, but love for the sex is more apt to make fools of men than any other cause. Dick wrote me all about it from Montreal, and I had mother's version also. It delights her, of course, for she is as true and sincere a believer as she is a good woman. Well, what is the latest? How is Agnes? How has father got along with the business since Dick left? Does mother grow old-looking? How are all the girls I used to know? How many of them are married?'

'Hold on, Dick! Do you think it is the part of a host to stuff your guest with questions? Be aisy, as we say in the old country. Give a man a chance to breathe. But, before I forget it, let me ask you—I promised your mother to make the inquiry—why is it that you have not been home for so long a time?—it's over a year.'

‘I’ll tell you — But, come to think of it, I cannot, for I know of no reason why, except that I have been so interested in my surroundings here that I do not care to leave Boston. But now that Dick is away from home, and father and mother practically alone, I suppose it is my duty to go and see them, and I will do so. It would cheer them, I know, and I love them both dearly — But hark! That is the supper bell, and you must be hungry. Come down to the dining room, and after the meal we will go out and take a stroll about the city, and down on to the Common.’

‘I’m with you,’ responded the pedagogue.

After supper Tom proposed a stroll on the Common, and Cluney readily assenting, the two friends started for that favorite resort of Bostonians. The muggy, warm weather of the day had given place to a clear and cooler atmosphere, induced by a brisk north-west wind, which had set in in the late afternoon.

The fashionable promenades on the Common were filled with throngs of well-dressed people, who found relief in the open air from the summer atmosphere of the houses.

‘The people here,’ said Master Cluney, ‘impress me as having a smart, independent way and air about them, which are in marked contrast to the manners of the people of the Provinces. They seem wide-awake, independent, and with a dash of swagger and braggadocio which is, after all, not unbecoming to them.’

‘You are right,’ said Tom. ‘The Yankees are a wide-awake, smart and even superior people to those you find in the Provinces — not that there is any better material in them, but under a free popular government like that

prevailing here the manhood of the individual or the individuality of the man, whichever it may be, finds ample room for growth and development. Men are made ambitious here because there is no position in the nation to which a man properly qualified may not aspire. I like the American people so much better than those of the Provinces that I do not want to live in that part of the country again.'

'And yet there is much to criticise here, also. You remember Tom Moore's notes on America, and what kind of people he met here?'

'Yes, and I have read them with indignation. Though he may be a fine poet, the English aristocracy took him under their wing and made a snob of him. He gauged American manners and men by an English measure, and couldn't understand why a people, under pioneer conditions of development, could not have the finished graces and manners of the old aristocracy whose patronage he enjoyed, and perhaps, also, for whose delectation he wrote his American notes. Bah! I despise Moore. But, to change the subject, wouldn't you like to go to the theatre?'

'I would, indeed. 'I have not been to one since I left London, ten years ago.'

'Very well; we will go to the National Theatre. It is not the highest-toned place of amusement in the city, but you can have a good deal of fun there!'

'That's what I'd like, Tom. At a place of amusement I think the best form of entertainment is comedy, or plays that show us the comic side of life. Shakespere is the great high priest of the drama, and his tragedies are wonderful productions; but I honestly like his comedies

best. Such plays, also, as the *School for Scandal*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, and the *Honey-Moon*, are fine and amusing productions.'

'It is singular,' said Tom, 'that you should have named the *Honey-Moon*, for that is the play which is billed at the National tonight.'

'Well, it is singular, as you say. I saw it performed in Dublin, and afterwards in London, just before my departure for America. It has been immensely popular on the other side, and I presume it takes well here. There is a sparkle and spirit about it from beginning to end that is truly refreshing.'

'I agree with you,' said Tom, 'it is one of those masterly works of the dramatic art that will not easily tire by repetition. I have seen it several times, and will enjoy it again. It is one of the immortals of the stage.'

'And yet,' said Cluney, 'if I remember correctly, it has a sad history—that is, sad for its author. It was written by one John Tobin—an Englishman with an Irish name—about the beginning of this century. He offered it to the English manager Kemble, who refused it, claiming that it had no originality, but was a plagiarism from comedies of Shakespeare and others. Tobin found it impossible to persuade either actor or manager to take his comedy and produce it upon the stage, and the poor fellow died—I believe he died at sea, on a voyage to the West Indies for his health—without realizing that he had written one of the most brilliant and successful acting comedies in the English language. The *Honey-Moon*, I believe, was not produced until a year after his death, and then its success was immense. I think it had a run in Dublin beyond that of any other

comedy, not even excepting Sheridan's brilliant *School for Scandal*.'

'What you tell me,' said Tom, 'interests me greatly. Poor fellow! How often the creative genius dies of neglect, while his works become immortal. There is a curious analogy in the lives of great men—neglected and even persecuted while living; when dead, immortalized, after the stupid world has awakened to their excellence.'

'But, here we are, at the theatre. I think we would better go into the family circle, so-called, which is the first gallery of the theatre. Here we will be just a little above the level of the stage, and can see the play to the best advantage.'

'I'll leave it to your judgment, Tom, for you should know best,' was the reply.

Tom procured tickets and the friends entered the theatre. At one side, the first thing that attracted attention was a bar, where liquors were sold.

'Why,' remarked the master, 'this is quite old country style.'

'I did not know it,' remarked Tom. 'Whatever style it may be, it is not a good one, for it affords too ready means for some of the people who attend this place to get drunk before the play is over, and to make themselves disagreeable.'

The entrance was on the street floor, on which level the pit or main hall of the auditorium was located, the seats extending out under the galleries on either side and in the rear.

The first gallery, or family circle, was reached by flights of stairs from the lobby on either side. Above

this was a second gallery, with a separate entrance, and above it an upper or third gallery, where newsboys and street gamins who could raise a ninepence found a place to have an evening's fun, and making things lively by their cat-calls, shouting, and other hideous noises, at which they were expert. Still above this, and in the rear, almost at the ceiling of the theatre, was a small gallery reserved for colored people, and known as 'nigger heaven.'

At the time in question a colored person, no matter how respectable, would not be allowed in any other part of the theatre. Occasionally a colored man would be found who had the hardihood to obtain a ticket for the pit, and enter it. The moment he was discovered by the gallery 'gods,' however, there would be shouts of 'nigger in the pit!' 'put him out!' 'put him out!' and if he did not take the hint and go out, the demands would swell into an uproar that would not be stilled until the man was either quietly or forcibly ejected.

Tom explained these arrangements to Master Cluncy, as best he could, amid the noise made in the galleries, which, as the time approached for the rising of the curtain, swelled into an almost continuous clamor, and which ceased partially when the orchestra struck up the music, quiet only being vouchsafed when the curtain was rung up.

The characters of the play were sustained by members of the excellent stock company, under the management of Mrs. Pelby, widow of William Pelby, who on this occasion sustained the character of Juliana herself, that of Duke Aranza being taken by the leading heavy man, Mr. Fleming; Jacques, by 'Old Spear,' as he was then called,

while, in the cast of female characters, Mrs. Vincent took the part of Volante, and Mrs. Pryor that of Zamora.

The play was rendered with all the dash and vigor of a strong company of players, and received the closest attention of even the third gallery, famed for its usual turbulence.

When the Duke, in his assumed disguise as a peasant, said to his indignant and disappointed bride, Juliana, in answer to her remark that perhaps he would beat her: 'Beat you! The man that lays his hand upon a woman, save in the way of kindness, is a wretch whom 'twere gross flattery to name a coward!' there was a surging storm of applause, which made Cluney remark, 'If they are a rough set, they are manly, at least.'

In the second scene of the third act, where Spear, as Jacques, personated the duke, there occurred an episode that is believed to be altogether singular in theatrical experience. Spear was a natural buffoon, and, in the part of the mock duke, his acting was so peculiarly comical that it appealed more particularly to the uncouth gods of the gallery, who fully enjoyed it.

But in the pit there was seated a stout, middle-aged man, who was so irresistibly impressed with Spear's comicality, that he laughed so loudly, and contorted his body so violently that he drew from the stage, much to the embarrassment and annoyance of the actors, the attention of the whole house, and particularly of the third gallery, the gods of which were at first highly pleased with the fun, but soon became indignant that any one in the pit should presume to take the noise-making out of their hands, or rather their mouths, and who set up a howl of 'put him out!' 'dry up!' 'bag yer

head!’ and other remarks which savored more of indignation than of elegance.

One of the officers on duty went to the man, and ordered him to desist, which he honestly tried to do, and succeeded in doing so long as he kept his eyes off the stage. But in an evil moment, when the mock duke was on the point of giving audience to the wronged wife, and was saying: ‘I must appear important: big as a country pedagogue, when he enters the school-room with—a-hem! and terrifies the apple-munching urchins with the creaking of his shoes’—the countryman incautiously looked up, and was seized with such a fit of uncontrollable laughter as again brought things to a stand-still, and drowned the remainder of the mock duke’s soliloquy. The offender was removed, limp, laughing, and unresisting.

The friends did not wait for the afterpiece, for the reason that by going out early they would avoid the crowd. This was suggested by Tom’s former experience at this place of amusement.

‘Now,’ said Tom, ‘we will go to Parker’s restaurant, have a lunch, and then home and to bed, for you must be tired after your journey,’

Cluney consented, and the friends repaired to Parker’s eating house, which was located in the basement of the stone building on the corner of Court street and Court square, the entrance being on the latter—by stone steps from the sidewalk, guarded by an iron railing.

Harvey D. Parker himself, in a white apron, waited upon his guests. He was below medium size, but quick, active and pleasant, and furnished the best of viands, cooked and served in a manner which made his place famous even at that time.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH THOMAS GASTON AVOWS HIS UNBELIEF IN THE
IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

The morning succeeding his arrival in Boston the pedagogue was up early, and, being joined by Tom, took a stroll before breakfast. They walked down Cambridge street to the West Boston bridge. This was to afford Cluney an opportunity to see the Charles river basin when it looked its best, with the morning sun smiling on it. On the way down, Tom pointed out the old Medical College on Grove street.

This brought up the Parkman murder, and incidentally the work of a medical student. Tom expressed regret that it was the vacation season, as he should like to take his friend into the dissecting room.

‘That must be a nauseating business;’ said Cluney. ‘Much as I would like the practical knowledge acquired by the work of dissection, it would, I think, sicken me.’

‘It is not an agreeable work,’ replied Tom, ‘and the odor is so bad that we have to smoke cigars in order to deaden it. But, then, one forgets this in the practical study of anatomy. I must acknowledge that I like it, though at first I thought I never should.’

‘I suppose you have studied the chemistry of putrefaction enough to know the processes by which the human body is resolved into its gaseous and residual elements? I have not familiarity enough with organic

chemistry to know it as I would like to, though in theory I know something of it.'

'And yet,' said Tom, 'my first lessons in chemistry were learned from you. The experiments you made, simple as they may have been, were object lessons to me that I will never forget. Your demonstration, that in the union of oxygen with hydrogen in combination with carbon, water was one of the resulting products, was to me a new and surprising revelation. It was a key that opened a storehouse of wonders, and started me on the quest, the realization of which is that all phenomena are ultimately resolvable into the action of energy upon matter. I recall the delight which I experienced when first I realized the fact that to produce the water of our earth there must have been a state of conflagration maintained upon it for millions of years, perhaps; for water can only be produced in one way, it being, curiously enough, a sort of liquid ashes of combustion, though more properly a compound of elements. What a vast, what a grand conflagration that must have been; but how insignificant it was in comparison to that which is now going on in our parent globe, the sun!'

'Yes; these vast forces in the planets are beyond our conception, but we can still admire them. You must have enjoyed your opportunities of pursuing your favorite study of chemistry here. The study of organic chemistry to me has great attractions, but I have never had the opportunities that you have had,' remarked Cluney.

'You may think it singular, but my study of organic chemistry has had what I may call a metaphysical significance to me in the study of biology as well as—now,

don't laugh—theology. In other words, it has given me ideas of the laws of the growth and dissolution of organic bodies that in turn enable me to think about and weigh mental or psychological matters in a manner that I never could have done without such aid.'

'I can understand this, to be sure, but is not such a method likely to be misleading?'

'How can it be, except perhaps in the matter of deduction, where that is carried beyond the bounds of reason? To illustrate, life has its origin in cell structure, and there is a perfect analogy in the development of man and the other animals in the embryonic stages. Before birth, each is after its kind, and the human animal is more capable of higher development, because, first, he has a larger brain; then, he is more imitative, and, then, he is capable of reasoning and experimentation. But as he has his origin as an animal, in dissolution he is like one. His body, after life ceases, is only a dead carcass, nothing more. Now, is not this rational deduction?'

'But the soul, Tom,—the spirit,—what of it?'

'If I said it was immaterial, you would probably accuse me of punning. But, as to the soul, what, after all, is it? The ego is only the personality of the man, when in life. Withdraw vitality, and it may be likened to the tone of an instrument, that has worn out or been broken. It exists no more; it is a light gone out.'

'Then you believe the existence of the soul or spirit is conditioned to that of the body?'

'You have expressed my idea, exactly.'

'That is a curious notion, Tom. Where did you run across it?' asked Cluney, laughing.

'To tell the truth,' replied Tom, 'I should be puzzled

to tell whether it has been evolved from my own reasoning or not, but I think it has.'

'Well, let us hear by what process of reasoning you arrive at such a conclusion?'

'It is this: I cannot conceive of a process without matter in action. Now, though I do not know what the mechanical or chemical action of the human brain is, I know there must be such action in the evolution of thought. Then it requires a brain for even an ego or soul, or it cannot think, or see, or hear, or feel, through its auxiliaries, the eyes, ears, and nerves; therefore, not having these it cannot have a conscious existence. More than this, an organism must be nourished by a circulatory system, which, in its turn, receives its supply from the results of the chemical action and reaction in the stomach. In other words, a soul or spirit, in order to see, hear, feel and think, must have an organism similar to our's, with like digestive and assimilative functions to support and sustain it. Do you see my point?'

'I do, Tom, and it is a strong one, I must allow. But given its truth, what are we here for? If this life is all and its close ends all, what is it worth? When man begins to know something, that is, when his intellect becomes matured, he dies, and is ended. — It looks as if there was some huge mistake in this plan.'

'Yes,' remarked Tom, 'almost as big a one as there is in the orthodox plan of salvation, which saves only the baker's dozen here and there, and damns the majority. Well, if it be so, it is, and that is all there is about it.'

'Do you think if this were the case, life would be worth living?'

'Why not? Indeed, from this fact alone, it should be

made doubly valuable, and men, generally realizing it, should become less selfish, and vie with one another in making life happy for all, instead of making it miserable, as most of them now do.'

'Of course, I only admit the force of your reasoning in this matter, not its truth. You do not know that, when life becomes extinct it ends all for the individual.'

'I do not claim to know this, though my reason convinces me it is so. Neither do you know that the individuality of the body is perpetuated after its dissolution, except by what is called faith, which is born of belief in tradition handed down through bible and church.'

'You will find, Tom, that the weight of the oldest and highest authority is in the balance against you.'

'Well, I have the weight of the strongest reason to uphold me. I think my position is the strongest.'

'You may think differently later on, Tom. It is not safe at any time to assume that you know all that is to be known about anything, or indeed all that you will know about it.'

'Very true, my good preceptor. I would not shame your sound philosophical teaching by any such assumption. I do not think that I know it all, as the saying is. I am aware that in this crucible of thought and reflection, which, after all, is the highest form of life-enjoyment, we must continually modify if we do not radically change our opinions on vital questions.'

'Yes, and after you have swung round the circle of scientific thought and deduction, you may come back again to where you started from.'

'My dear master, I am surprised at this remark. A man of brains can no more go back to where he started

from in the line of thought and deduction than he can return to the womb in which he was conceived. The laws of nature are progressive, not retrogressive.'

'Tom, I cannot help reverting to your argument about the apparent absurdity of inorganic spirits performing organic functions, but you have not taken into account the circumstance that they could not have an individuality if they had not an organism, and an organism, as you know, presupposes functions.'

'True; but there is no proof of a reproduction of the human organism, especially an immaterial one. If man were thus reproduced, why not the animals? The thing is absurd—the offspring of ignorance of natural laws.'

'I have no doubt that Swedenborg saw how illogical the after existence of man was, according to the ordinary conceptions of it, for he simply teaches that life is continued on this earth in a higher plane of existence; that we have there, as here, an organism requiring nutrition; that the spirits of infants there grow into adults; that there is marriage and reproduction there, as here; that, in fact, spirit life is, in many respects, similar to this one, with immortality added.'

'That is logical, in its way; and he no doubt feeds his spirits on the ghosts of animals, fruits, and vegetables. Just conceive of a spirit butcher cutting off a tenderloin steak from a dead spirit beef carcass! But, I fear I am getting somewhat mixed up—it's mixed metaphor, in fact. But has he no heaven and hell?'

'He has both. They are practically social conditions, the good spirits congregating together, and by establishing an ideal state of society, contribute to their mutual enjoyment and happiness. This is heaven. Hell con-

sists of a similar affiliation of bad spirits, who make others miserable by their wickedness and bad actions, and are in turn made wretched by the wickedness of others. It is a state of irrepressible lawlessness and misery.'

'But a most ingenious way to solve the problem of punishing the wicked and rewarding the good. It is a great improvement on the orthodox plan, but as a business method is not so promising. Of the two, I must allow that I prefer Swedenborg's. But pardon me for running on in this way. I fear it has prevented you from enjoying the view of the bridge.'

'It has not, Tom. I do not know why it is, but when I am engaged in thinking or listening to the thoughts of others, I am conscious of a kind of double existence, for I not only enjoy what is before my physical vision, but what I see mentally, also; that is, the picture before my eyes is heightened or in a measure transfigured by the mental stimulus.'

'Well, I'm glad of that, for I often think I must be very tiresome when I mount my hobby-horse.'

'You will find your hobby a hard one to ride in this world, Tom; for your way is so divergent, I fear, that you will often be lonesome for want of company. You are a sad Infidel, Tom; nearly as bad as Tom Paine is estimated to be by Christians generally. And this reminds me, do not the Infidels hold meetings in Boston, and have you ever attended them?'

'They do, and I have been a frequent attendant at their meetings. I admire these people for their moral courage and their sensible humanitarian ideas.'

'I'd like to go with you and hear them some time.'

'You shall go, and, more than that, I will procure you

an introduction to the editor of the Investigator, which is the organ of the Infidels in the United States. But come, let us go back to our boarding house.'

After breakfast was over, Tom said to his friend:

'I must tell you something in regard to my life in this city, which will perhaps explain some things for your enlightenment. You may or may not be aware of the fact that I have not drawn upon my father for means of support for over a year. At any rate, I have not asked or received a shilling from him in that time. When he wrote asking why I did not, I replied that I was earning enough to board and clothe myself, and pay tuition fees, but did not say what I was doing to earn money.

'Now, I'll tell you: I have a kind of independent position on one of the leading daily papers here, and do editorial and other writing for it. Thanks to Isaac Pitman, I have been enabled to combine pleasure, or rather instruction, with business. I report sermons, speeches, lectures, and in the evenings devote my time mostly to this work, to looking over exchange papers, writing, and in the college term to study. I shall receive my diploma at the close this term, and then, perhaps, put out my shingle. Here it is, all ready to put in place on "the outer wall.'"

THOMAS GASTON, M.D.,

PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON.

'Tom,' said Cluney, taking him by the hand, 'let me thank you for being so frank with me. You are frankness itself in all things—as frank as you are courageous. Indeed, the one always accompanies the other, at least in young men. Well, let me in turn confide to you the

fact that, on the eve of my departure from Chebucto, your good mother desired me to find out just what you were doing, and to give you this purse of one hundred gold sovereigns, and her blessing. You see, she thought you might perhaps need a few pounds, and was too proud to ask your father for money.'

'Heaven bless her, my dear good mother! I suspect, however, that she thought that the reason for my not going home was a financial one, which, as you now see, is not the case. Well, though I do not need this money, I will accept it, for I know it would pain her to refuse it, and I would not willingly give her pain.

'But now I must to work. Will you go with me to the office, and wait till I get through my work? I will give you papers to read, and in an hour or so can go out with you, and we will then hire a team and take a drive out through Cambridge and Brookline, where you will see many elegant private residences, as well as the Harvard College buildings.'

'I am at your service,' said Cluney; and the friends forthwith repaired to the office of the Daily Times, at the head of State street.

Here they entered a dingy office, with two desks, some chairs half occupied with newspapers, piles of opened papers here and there, a well-worn dictionary, and much dust-covered rubbish peculiar to an old-time newspaper office in Boston. One of the desks was occupied by a tall and somewhat slim man, with side whiskers, bright, keen black eyes, but careworn face. He was the editor and proprietor of the Times. Tom exchanged pleasant greetings with him, and then introduced his friend, who was cordially saluted, and invited to take a seat.

Excusing himself on account of press of business, the editor then turned to Tom Gaston, and gave him some directions in regard to a leading article for the issue of the following morning, and requested him to do a half-dozen minor things, and then resumed his work. Tom first took up the smaller matters, which consisted in 'boiling down' articles from exchanges, and interlarding them with comments of his own. He handed his friend some papers to read in the meantime, and the silence of the dingy office was broken only by a scratching noise of the pens on paper, made by editor and assistant. Then, when he had finished the smaller matters—which took him about two hours to accomplish—Tom arose, and, handing what he had written to the editor, said:

'I will have the leader ready for you by evening, and will send it down by messenger. I must now keep my promise to my guest, and give him a glimpse of our suburbs.'

'Do so,' was the reply, 'and, by the way, Mr. Gaston, here is a line to the Blank livery stable where my team is. Take it. The exercise will do the horse good, and I will not want to use him before the evening.'

'Many thanks,' said Tom, 'I will take your team, and return it to the stable by four o'clock, at the latest.'

'It was clever and thoughtful of your editor to offer you his team,' said Cluney, after the friends had left the office, 'and you did quite right in accepting the offer. A clever man like that usually means what he says when he offers to do a friendly act, and would be hurt by a refusal.'

'Yes, and under the circumstances a refusal would be positively rude, for his offer was solely a matter of hospi-

talities for your benefit. He never made such an offer to me before, and I am satisfied that he would not have done so today if you were not in the question. Well, we shall have a fine time of it, for his turnout is one of the best in Boston.'

It is needless to say that the ride of the day was a most enjoyable one, and included a good dinner at Porter's, in North Cambridge.

'These are beautiful suburbs,' remarked Cluney. 'There are elegant places in Cambridge and Brookline, — equal in many respects to the surroundings of Dublin, though you have not the elaborate mansions that are to be found around the Irish capital. But there are comparatively few of these, while in your suburbs fine dwellings and well kept grounds are the rule; and your roads are nearly if not quite as good as our Irish roads.'

CHAPTER VI.

MORE OF THOMAS GASTON'S MATERIALISM — THEODORE PARKER ON THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

'Shall we take another morning walk?' asked Tom, on the day following, which was Saturday.

'Yes, to be sure,' replied Cluney, 'and we can renew our talk on physics, or, if you will, metaphysics.'

So they took their way, after the morning meal, down to the Common, and along the Beacon street mall, out to the Milldam, which began at the Public Garden, which latter was protected from the waters of the Back Bay, or empty basin, so called, above the Milldam, by a dyke

or embankment, just on the eastern line of Arlington street of today. The grade of the Garden was several feet lower than the embankment, which was on a level with the Milldam road, now a part of Beacon street.

The friends walked out over the Milldam, the history of which improvement Tom recited to his friend. The idea was to keep the tide out of this section of the bay, and by allowing it to flow into the other section through a tide gate, and holding it there, direct its flow into the so-called empty basin, through flumes which carried the water to the waterwheels, converting the water into power for the purpose of grinding wheat into flour.

‘That was a great enterprise,’ remarked Cluney.

‘It seemed so,’ replied Tom, ‘but it never amounted to anything profitable to the investors. There is now a foundry on it, the machinery of which is run by water. I expect to see the day when this whole territory will be filled in and built upon.’

‘Tom, you are an optimist in all matters of material progress, though a sad pessimist in religious matters.’

‘It is because I believe in substance, while what is shadow, so to speak, is so much a matter of fancy that it is too unsubstantial for serious consideration — except for churchmen, who find in it a rich mine for human investment, on which they receive all the dividends.’

‘Do you really think there is nothing in religion, Tom?’

‘If you would change your question to embrace theology instead of religion, I would say I know there is nothing in it beyond the glorious possibilities of a snug profession for the sons of mediocrity, or where ability may have its soaring wings clipped. As to real religion,

comprised in the teaching of moral ethics, and their practice, and the cultivation of social practices and brotherly love — a community of mutual good-will and thoughtful living — that is a thing I fully believe in. It is at once the offspring and the parent of all true civilization; and, indeed, what progress has been made in our civilization comes from this heaven which is operating in spite of all adverse influences. I would not do away with religion any more than I would destroy civilization, whose handmaid it is. But I would divorce it from the fetichism of barbarism, which had its origin in ancestor worship, and changed to hero worship and to that of the gods. Our modern Christian God is as great an improvement on the early Christian one as the latter was on the Jewish Jehovah. But the theologians have so metamorphosed the real religion by enveloping it in the ghostly shroud of fetichism that it is more promotive of fear and selfishness than of the nobler instincts of our nature. It tends to make slaves and cowards of men, and to take from life much that is worth living for. A man must either stifle his reason or be damned for doubting. I would rather be in hell with the free and fearless thinkers of the world — the noble spirits who have suffered for exercising the rights of manhood — than in heaven with cruel priests and the cringing cowards who obey them!’

‘Tom, I sympathize with your feeling, if not with your judgment. What a glorious martyr you would have been had you lived in the heroic days of Christian martyrdom! But, to return to the subject, do you think people would be satisfied with a religion of pure morality — one that did not hold out any hope of a future existence, and a system of rewards and punishments?’

‘I hold it to be wrong, outrageously dishonest, in fact, to promise what you know you have not, and to make dupes of the honest fools who believe you. Of course the people who have been fed on such visionary hopes and fears, would be loath to surrender them, as in the case of users of liquor and tobacco. They would still want the good (themselves) rewarded, and the wicked (the other people) punished. Now, the acceptance of these very shadowy conceptions, and the hopes and fears which they excite, induce two conditions among men which are baneful. One is, that men are made intensely selfish by them, and act as if their motto was, ‘every one for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.’ The other is, that it fosters a system of mental domination on the part of priests—I use the term in the broad sense as including all ministers who preach about what they know nothing of—who claim to represent the ruling power of the universe, when they do not do so any more than the steam engine which converts energy into power; while on the part of the people there is established a mental slavery which has had an enervating as well as a retarding effect upon the social and industrial evolution of the human race.’

‘How do you make that out, Tom?’ asked the master.

‘I have read history, and I know that it comes to us strained through theological meshes. But, by a fearless analysis of cause and effect in it, I can trace progression in just the ratio that peoples and nations have practised materialistic ideas in preference to the ghostly ones. Science has grown in spite of the most iniquitous system of persecution ever organized against the right development of knowledge of the physical forces in nature, the

only tangible things which we can deal with in our struggles through life. Ignorant and narrow-minded condemnation of true knowledge has ever prevailed in the churches, while assumed piety and pretended asceticism have been honored and their pretenders canonized.'

'Do you mean to say that all churchmen are ignoramuses or dishonest?'

'I think the ruling spirits of the churches have been in a measure ignorant of the real nature of natural laws and phenomena or have been dishonest in the fact that they considered the knowledge to be thus acquired would loosen their hold upon the masses of mankind. Do not the Catholic rulers hold that it is better to keep the world in ignorance rather than risk the loss of souls or their damnation through the scepticism and resulting impiety of those who obtain knowledge of natural laws? For it seems to be a fact that scientific knowledge, which is the acquirement of right ideas and conceptions of our condition and surroundings in this world, always loosens and in many cases cuts the bonds which theology has bound humanity in.'

'There is much truth in what you say, Tom, as I can vouch in my own person. I am not orthodox, though I fail to see, in the way you present them, the objections to theology, or that, as a system, it has had a repressive influence upon human intelligence. You must allow that there have been other predominating influences in human affairs which may be fairly made as chargeable for the persecution and discouragement of scientific investigation, and that the church has had an important influence in the affairs of nations, and has done a really noble work.'

'This reminds me of what Theodore Parker said of the

Catholic church in a recent lecture. I have it here in my notes. Shall I read some extracts to you?’

‘I would like very much to hear them. Suppose we sit down while you read?’

‘Very well,’ said Tom, taking out his note-book. ‘I will read them to you. In estimating the merits of the Catholic church, he said:

“The peculiar merit of the Catholic church consists in its assertion of the truth, that God still inspires mankind as much as ever; that he has not exhausted himself in the creation of a Moses, or a Jesus, the law, or the Gospel, but is present and active in spirit as in space. Admitting this truth, so deep, so vital to the race—a truth preserved in the religions of Egypt, Greece and Rome, and above all in the Jewish faith—clothing itself with all the authority of ancient days; the word of God in its hands both tradition and Scripture; believing it had God’s infallible and exclusive inspiration at its heart, for such no doubt was the real belief, and actually, through its Christian character, combining in itself the best interests of mankind, no wonder it prevailed. Its countenance became as lightning. It stood and measured the earth. It drove asunder the nations. It went forth in the mingling tides of civilized corruption and barbarian ferocity, for the salvation of the people—conquering and to conquer; its brightness as the light.

“It separated the spiritual from the temporal power, which had been more or less united in the theocracies of India, Egypt and Judea, and which can only be united to the lasting detriment of mankind. The church, in theory, stood on a basis purely moral; it rose in spite of the state, in the midst of its persecutions. At first it

shunned all temporal affairs, and never allowed a temporal power to be superior to itself. The department of political action belonged to the state, that of intellectual and religious action — the stablest and strongest power — to the church. Hence its care of education; hence the influence it exerted on literature.”

‘He is a candid reader of history,’ remarked Cluney.

‘Glad you think so,’ said Tom, and resumed his notes.

“Ancient Rome was the city of organizations and practical rules. Nowhere was the individual so thoroughly subordinated to the state. War, science, and lust, of old time, had here incarnated themselves. The same practical spirit organized the church, with its dictator, its senate, and its legions. The discipline of the clerical class, their union, zeal, and commanding skill gave them the solidity of the phalanx and the celerity of the legion. The church prevailed as much by its organization as by its doctrine. What could a band of loose-girt apostles, each warring on his own account, avail against the refuge of lies, where strength and sin had entrenched themselves, and sworn never to yield? An organized church was demanded by the necessities of the time; an association of soldiers called for an army of saints.”

‘That is well and tersely presented,’ observed Cluney.

‘It is,’ said Tom, and read on.

“A sensual people required forms, the church gave them; superstitious rites, divination, images, the church — obdurate as steel when the occasion demands, but pliant as molten metal when yielding is required — the church allowed this. Its forms grew out of the wants of the time and place.

“Was there no danger that the priesthood, thus able

and thus organized, should become ambitious of wealth and power? The greatest danger was that fathers should seek to perpetuate authority for their children. But this class of men, cut off from posterity by the prohibition of marriage, in the midst of feudal institutions where all depended on birth; when descent from a successful pirate, or some desperate free-booter, secured a man elevation, political power, and wealth; the clergy were cut off from all inducements to accumulate authority. In that long period, from Alaric to Columbus, when the church had ample revenues; the most able and cultivated men in her ranks, so thoroughly disciplined; the awful power over souls of men, far more formidable than bayonets, skilfully plied; with an acknowledged claim to miraculous inspiration and divine authority, were it not for the celibacy of the clergy—damnable institution, and pregnant with mischief as it was—we should have had a sacerdotal caste, the Levites of Christianity, whose little finger would have been thicker than the loins of all the former Levites, and the dawn of a better day must have been deferred for thousands of years. The world is managed wiser than some men fancy.”

‘He has the faculty of a giant in the use of language,’ interjected Cluney.

‘True,’ said Tom, and resumed: “The church, reacting against the sensuality and excessive publicity of the heathen world, in its establishment of convents and monasteries, opened asylums for delicate spirits that could not bear the rage of savage life; afforded a hospital for men sick of the fever of the world, worn-out and shattered in the storms of state, who craved a little rest for sweet charity’s sake, before they went where the wicked

ceased from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Among the sensual the saint is always the anchorite; religion gets as far as possible from the world. Rude men require obvious forms and sensible shocks to their roughness. The very place where the monks prayed and the nuns sang was sacred from the ruthless robber. As he drew near it the tiger was tame within him; the mailed warrior kissed the ground, and religion awoke in his heart. The fear of hell, and reverence for the spot, chained up the devil for a time."

'That description couldn't be bettered by any Catholic writer,' said Cluney. 'It is wonderfully and tersely descriptive, and true.'

'Perhaps it is,' said Tom, and went on reading:

"Then the church had a most diffusive spirit; it would Christianize as fast as the state would conquer; its missionaries were found in the courts of barbarian monarchs, in the caves and dens of the savage, diffusing their doctrine and singing their hymns. Creating an organization the most perfect the world ever saw; with a policy wiser than any monarch had dreamed of, and which grew more perfect with the silent accretions of time; with address to allure the ambitious to its high places, and so turn all their energy into its deep wide channel; with mysteries to charm the philosophic, and fill the fancy of the rude; with practical doctrines for earnest workers, and subtle questions, always skilfully left open for men of acute discernment; with rites and ceremonies addressed to every sense, rousing the mind like a Grecian drama, and promising a participation with God through the sacrament; with wisdom enough to bring men really filled with religion into its ranks; with

good sense and good taste to employ all the talent of the times in the music, the statues, the painting, the architecture of the temple, thus consecrating all the powers of man to man's noblest work; with so much of Christian truth as the world in its wickedness could not forget, — no wonder the church spread wide her influence; sat like a queen among nations, saying to one go, and it went, to another come, and it came."

'Why this is admirable,' said Cluney. 'It is a string of rhetorical pearls, and every pearl a truth.'

'Perhaps,' rejoined Tom, and resumed reading:

"Then, again, its character, in theory, was kindly and humane. It softened the asperity of secular wars; forbid them in sacred seasons; established its Truce of God, and gave a chance for rage to abate. Against the king, it espoused the cause of the people. With somewhat in its worst days of the spirit of him who gave his life a ransom for many; with much of it really active in its best days and its theory at all times, the church stood up, for long ages, the only bulwark of freedom. It came between the haughty feudal baron and the captive, serf, slave, and defenceless maiden, and stayed the insatiate hand. Its curse blasted like lightning. Even in feudal times, it knew no distinction of birth; all were 'conceived in sin,' 'shapen in iniquity,' alike the peasant and the peer. The distinction of birth was apparent, not real. Yet were all children of God, who judged the heart, and knew no man's person; all heirs of heaven, for whom prophets and apostles had uplifted their voice; yes, for whom God had worn this weary, wasting weed of flesh, and died a culprit's death.'

'That's all true, Tom, — true as holy writ!'

‘No doubt,’ said Tom, dryly, and continued reading :

“The influence of the church is perhaps greater than even its friends maintain. It laid its hands on the poor and down-trodden ; they were raised, fed, and comforted. It rejected, with loathing, from its coffers, wealth got by extortion and crime. It touched the shackles of the slave, and the serf arose disenthralled, the brother of the peer. It annihilated slavery, which Protestant cupidity would keep forever. It touched the diadem of a wicked king, and it became a crown of thorns ; the monarch’s sceptre was a broken reed before the crozier of the church. It limited the power of kings, and gave religious education to the people, which no ancient institution aimed to impart. It had ceremonies for the sensual ; confessionals for the pious — needed and beautiful in their time — labors of love for the true-hearted ; pictures and images to arouse devotion in the man of taste ; temples whose aspiring turrets and sombre vaults filled the kneeling crowd with awe ; it had doctrines for the wise ; rebukes for the wicked ; prayers for the reverent ; hopes for the holy, and blessings for the true. It sanctified the babe, newly born and welcome ; watched over marriage with a jealous eye ; fostered good morals ; helped men, even by its symbols, to partake the divine nature ; smoothed the pillow of disease and death, giving the soul wings, as it were, to welcome the death-angel, and gently, calmly, pass away. It assured masculine piety of its reward in heaven ; told the weak and wavering that divine beings would help him, if faithful. In the honors of canonization, it promised the most lasting fame on earth ; generations to come should call the good man a blessed saint, and his name endure while the Christian year went round.”

‘Why, Tom,’ said Cluney, ‘this man’s eloquence confounds me. He is a panegyrist, rather than a critic.’

‘Hold on,’ said Tom, ‘do not be too hasty in your conclusions. Now hear what he says in criticism:’

“But the church had vices, vast and awful to the thought. As its distinctive excellence was to proclaim the continuance of inspiration, so its sacramental sin was in limiting this inspiration to itself, thus setting bounds to the spirit of God and the soul of man. The wondrous mechanism of the church and much of its power came from this false assumption, that it alone had the word of God. So its organization was based on a lie, and required new lies to uphold, and prophets of lies to defend it. Its servants, the priests, became proud of spirit. The only keepers of Scripture and tradition; the only recipients of inspiration they forbid free inquiry as of no use; stifled conscience as only leading men into trouble; and excommunicated Common Sense, who asked ‘terrible questions,’ calling for the title deeds of the church. They went further, and forbid the banns between Reason and Religion; and when the parties insisted on the union, turned them both out of doors with a curse. The laity must not approach God, as the clergy; must only commune with Him in one kind.

“The church forgot God grants inspiration to no one except on condition he conforms to the divine law, living pure and true, and grants it only in proportion to his gifts and his use thereof; so relying upon the office and ‘apostolic succession’ for inspiration, the priests lived shameless and wicked lives, rivalling Sardanapalus and Domitian in their cruelty and sin. They became spiritual tyrants, forcing all men to utter the same creed,

submit to the same rite, reverence the same symbols, and be holy in the same way."

'Without creed, rites and symbols, what would the church have been?' interrupted Cluney, — 'Its ties would have been like ropes of sand.'

'True,' said Tom. 'To bind men body and soul, as it did, it needed stronger fetters, and accordingly it forged and used them. But I will continue Mr. Parker's panegyric of the Catholic church. He says, following what I have read you:

"In its zeal to separate the spiritual power from temporal hands the church took what was not its own — power over men's bodies; and made laws for the state. In its haste to give preeminence to spiritual things, it made its offices a bribe, greater than the state could give. The honor of sainthood — what was the fame of king and conqueror to that? It promised the rewards of high clerical office, and even of canonization, to the most mercenary and cruel of men, whose touch was pollution. Its list of saints is full of knaves and despots. The state was taken into the church — a refractory member. The Flesh and the Devil were baptized; 'took holy orders;' governed the church in some cases, but were still the Flesh and the Devil, though called by a Christian name. That divine man, whose name is ploughed into the world, said: 'If a man smite thee on one cheek, turn the other;' but if a man lifted his hand or voice against the church — it blasted him with damnation and hell."

'Here,' slyly remarked Tom, 'is another of your strings of rhetorical pearls — what are they?'

'They have a black look,' said Cluney, 'for the church.'

“Christ said his kingdom was not of this world; so said the church at first, and Christians refused to war, to testify in courts, to appear in the theatres, and foul their hands with the world’s sin. But soon as there was an organized priesthood, to defend themselves from the tyranny of the state, to exercise authority over the souls of men, power on the earth became needed. One lie leads to many. What the church first took in self-defence it afterwards clung to and increased, and was so taken up with the earthly kingdom it quite forgot its patrimony in heaven; so it played a double game, attempting to serve God, and keep on good terms with the devil. But it was once said, ‘no man can serve two masters.’ Unnatural, spiritual power could not be held without temporal authority to sustain it; so the church took fleshly weapons for its carnal ends. Monks raised armies; bishops led them; God was blasphemed by prayers to aid bloodshed.”

‘That,’ said Cluney, ‘is a strong arraignment, with no doubt some truth in it. But’—

‘Hold on,’ said Tom, ‘I will read a few more extracts, and then we can talk it over as we walk back.’

“The church was the exclusive vicar of God; she must have ‘the tonnage and the poundage of all free-spoken truth.’ To accomplish this end and establish her dogmas, she slew men, beginning with Priscillian and ‘the six Gnostics,’ in the fourth century, at Triers, and ending no one knows where, or when, or with whom. It had such zeal for the ‘unity of the faith,’ that it put prophets in chains; asked the sons of God if they were ‘greater than Jacob.’ It made Belief take the place of Life. It absolved men of their sins, past, present, and

future. Emancipated the clergy from the secular law, thus giving them license to sin. It sold heaven to extortioners for a little gold, and built St. Peters with the spoil. It wrung ill-gotten gains out of tyrants on their death-bed; devoured the houses of widows and the weak; built its cathedrals out of the spoils of orphans. It was greedy of gold and power, and at one time had wellnigh half the lands of England held in mortmain. It absolved men from oaths; broke marriages; told lies; forged charters and decretals; burned the philosophers; corrupted the classics; altered the words of the Fathers; changed the decisions of the Councils, and filled Europe with its falsehood. It fought the most hideous of wars; evangelized nations with the sword; laid kingdoms under interdict to gratify its pride."

'Dear me,' interrupted Cluney, 'this is a terrible arraignment.'

'It is,' said Tom, 'but let me give you a few more extracts.'

"The church boasts of its uniform doctrine, but it changes every age; of its peaceful spirit, but who fought the crusades, the wars of extermination in Switzerland, France, the Low Countries? To whom must we set down the ecclesiastical butchery that filled Europe with funeral piles? It quarreled with the temporal power, and built up institutions of tyranny to suppress truth; kept the bible to itself; made the Greek testament a prohibited book; brought dead men's bones into the temples, for the living to worship, and worked lying wonders to confirm false doctrine. It loved the night of the Dark Ages, and clung to its old dogmas."

'Oh, oh!' groaned Cluney. 'Can he say anything

worse of the church — anything that can equal it in severity, or shall I call it malignity?’

‘I think he can,’ said Tom. ‘Listen to this:’

‘The church came at length to be the colossus of crime, with a thin veil of hypocrisy drawn over its face, and that only. The vow of purity its children took, became a license for sin. The corruptest of courts was the court of the Pope. What reverence had the archbishops for the doctrines of the church? Cardinal Bembo bade Sadolet not to read St. Paul, it would spoil his taste. In early ages the Apostles were the devoutest of men; in later days their ‘successors’ were steeped to the lips in crime.”

‘There is more of this,’ remarked Tom. ‘Shall I read it to you, or have I read enough?’

‘Enough, Tom, enough! Though not a blind believer in everything pertaining to the Catholic church, I have been a student of her history, and can say this of what you have read: While there is much that is true in it, the facts are so warped by an unfriendly critic that they become the blackest of lies. Many of them are stale, and have been frequently disproved. Hallam, I see, is freely drawn from, as well as other writers of undoubted unfairness and enmity to the church.’

‘Then your panegyrist turns out to be a maligner. Well, I suppose a man is largely estimated by us from the fact that what he says agrees with or differs from our knowledge or conception of things.’

‘Largely so, I confess, Tom.’

And the friends retraced their steps. On the way into the city Cluney asked:

‘Did you take those notes for publication, Tom?’

‘I did. But you will laugh when I tell you that, as both Theodore Parker and the Catholic church are not in favor in Boston, now, where the leaven of Puritanism is still active, I could not get the report published in any of the dailies or weeklies. The fact is, the Irish are the under dog in the fight here, and Irish and Roman Catholic are convertible terms at this time.’

‘Well, Tom, this is no doubt natural enough—in fact, existing conditions are the natural outcome of pre-existing ones, always. The Irish may be kept down, for a time, but they are not easily repressed. The Catholic church encourages procreation, and the people who have the largest families will, in the long run, become the rulers in a nation of democratic usages, where Jack has as much to say in the choice of rulers as his master; and why shouldn’t they?’

‘I agree with you,’ said Tom. ‘American city families are small; Irish families are large. I foresee results.’

‘Will it be for the better, think you?’ asked Cluney.

‘It may be,’ said Tom, reflectively, ‘but I doubt it.’

CHAPTER VII.

MASTER CLUNEY VISITS A ‘PROFESSIONAL’ INFIDEL.

‘Well,’ said Tom, after supper, ‘what shall it be to-night—a missionary meeting, or a visit to my particular friend, the editor of the Investigator?’

‘I confess, Tom, that I prefer the Infidel. There will be freshness there, at least, and perhaps some originality. I think, also, after the Parker purgative of the afternoon,

that a dose of even radical infidelity might not be too drastic. Besides, I have a curiosity to see a professional Infidel, and hear him talk. I know I shall enjoy it.'

'I hope you will,' responded Tom.

The friends then took their way to a building located near the head of Washington street, just south of Cornhill, and ascended three flights of stairs, where Tom opened a door which revealed a composing room and men at work setting type. Going through this to an inner room, Tom and his friend found seated at a desk, a stout, well-built man, with large head, full eyes, a square, honest face, and jaws of iron, indicating a tenacious, unyielding and even aggressive nature. This face appeared to wear an habitually stern look, but this vanished at once into an expression of cordiality when Tom was recognized, and his friend was introduced.

Rising from his seat and cordially grasping the hand of the stranger, he said—

'Mr. Cluney, I am glad to welcome you to my humble office—the den where the faithful believe I am in the habit of hob-nobbing with the devil and conspiring against the churches, plotting their overthrow. I have just given out my last piece of copy to the printers, and feel like the man who has carried his burden to its destination and taken it from his shoulders.'

This was Horace Seaver. He was a man between thirty and forty years of age, with much of native vigor derived from a strong physique, and a good fund of animal spirits, the result of a good digestion. His forehead was high and massive, and his eyes filled with the reflective expression of the philosopher rather than the searching look of the man of the world.

‘My friend,’ said Tom, ‘preferred a visit to you to-night rather than go to a lecture, concert, or a missionary meeting, and that accounts for our presence here.’

‘Well,’ was Mr. Seaver’s reply, ‘I would feel flattered if I thought your friend did not choose me as being more of a curiosity than the others.’

‘To tell the truth,’ said Cluney, ‘my choice was prompted by curiosity, of that kind which expected to find in you a man something out of the common—one who had, no doubt, left early friends and social relations, and launched upon a troubled sea of doubt, and, shall I say it, darkness?’

‘Thank you for frankness, and in part you estimate me correctly. I have broken with early associations and many early friends, but though the future is not bright, it is not one of doubt to me, or even darkness. I have passed that period of my mental development in which doubt was a factor. I doubt no longer, but am as clear and positive in my mind in regard to the great question of life—man’s proper relation to nature—as a man in his normal senses should be.’

‘Your position, your contest against all the churches, almost against society, as it would seem to a Christian, is one which calls for rare fortitude and moral courage,’ remarked Cluney.

‘Yes. The soldier in the excitement of the battle may walk heroically up to the cannon’s mouth, and feel that if he dies, his country and kindred will honor his courage and bless his memory. But with the devoted men with whom I am associated, it requires a different and more abiding courage to face the formidable array of

entrenched bigotry, superstition, intolerance, and honest stupidity. Think of it for a moment: To oppose the institution which your fathers loved in centuries gone by; to sweep off the altars, forms, and usages that ministered to your mother's piety, helped her bear the bitter ills and cross of life, and gave her winged tranquility in the hour of death; to sunder your ties of social sympathy; destroy the rites associated with the aspiring dream of childhood, and its earliest prayer, and the sunny days of youth—to disturb these because they weave chains, invisible but despotic, which bind the arm and fetter the foot, and confine the heart; to hew down the hoary tree under whose shadow the nations played their game of life, and found in death the clod of the valley sweet to their weary bosom,—to destroy all this because it poisons the air and stifles the breath of the world,—it is a sad and bitter thing. It makes the heart throb, and the face, that is hard as iron all over in public, weeps in private, weak woman's tears. Such trials are not for vulgar souls; they feel not the riddle of the world!'

The editor spoke sadly, as if the retrospect of his life experience were passing in review before him, and then he added — 'But the die is cast. We have crossed the river and burnt our boats behind us. Reason and common sense are our pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, and we are heading for the land of intellectual freedom and emancipation from the Egyptian superstition which still dominates the world.'

'Do you expect to accomplish your mission in your lifetime?' asked the schoolmaster.

'I am not sanguine of producing any great revolution

in the minds of church people in my day, replied Mr. Seaver, 'but I hope to see the time when outspoken truth will be heard even by believing Christians, and when doubt will creep into the church, and disbelief in the shocking doctrine of eternal punishment will so assert itself as to humanize religion and make men think without fear of damnation. Men ought to be moral without the fear of punishment, or hope of special reward.'

'Your position is not a popular one with the world, I take it,' said Cluney.

'It is not,' replied Seaver, with a laugh. 'I do not know of a single public office that I could be elected to in the city of Boston, if it called for even one hundred votes to elect.'

'Do you like the position you occupy?' asked Cluney.

'Yes, and no. It is not agreeable to go through the streets and meet hundreds of people whom you know would crucify you, if they dared. But I can walk the street with the proud consciousness that I own myself, and am disenthralled from the fetters of superstition.'

'Is that a compensation for what you have to endure?'

'Yes; for in the struggle I am vindicating the manhood that is in me. I am as a soldier, enlisted for the war, which with me will be a struggle while life continues. The army of free thinkers is as yet small, and practically unorganized, while that of the churches—those champions of mental as well as corporal slavery—is overwhelming; and I may say that I feel a pride in being one of the leaders in it. We have noble spirits in our band, who exemplify in their lives what men can do

and endure for the sake of truth and freedom, and without hope of future reward or fear of future punishment.

‘You do not then believe in a hereafter,—in immortality of the soul?’

‘We do not. Our reason convinces us that the idea of after existence and immortality is preposterous—a relic of superstition, without a particle of proof, and impossible of demonstration. With us this is not a thing of doubt, but of conviction. We have got beyond the line of wavering doubt and uncertainty where we think we do not know—where our brain is in a fog. We are landed on the rock of human reason—that most stable position of intellectual existence—and thereon we have constructed our temple of Common Sense, of which that grand pioneer of American Liberty, Thomas Paine, is the greatest modern apostle, and good old Abner Kneeland, the founder of the Investigator, his worthy successor. I may be thought too sanguine—the world would doubtless say crazy—but, orthodox and intolerant as Puritan Boston now is, I expect to see a monument or memorial raised to these men in this city. The apostles of liberty will yet be estimated at their true worth.’

‘The outlook for such a consummation does not seem particularly bright at present,’ interjected Tom.

‘I can understand,’ pursued Cluney, addressing Seaver, ‘that, in cutting adrift from all the creeds and dogmas of Christianity, there may be a sense of freedom, an exhilaration like that of the schoolboy bowling at skittles, only you bowl at altars and pulpits. In that sense it might be fun—for the bowlers.’

‘You may give it that title, my friend; but I assure you that with us it is earnest fun. Though, I will admit,

there is a feeling of peculiar satisfaction in the work of unmasking the hypocrisy and inconsistency of theological religion. We have abundance of high and hoary things to aim at, and we never hesitate, like the Irishman at a fair, to hit a head when we see it.'

'Your constituency is not large, I take it?'

'No. Only those who can use their brains, and have the moral courage to listen and think—only such will hear us. On the other hand the ministers have the multitude, whom they hold on account of their continuous appeals to their selfishness, and to their fear.'

'Do you regard theology as of no account?' asked Cluney.

'Theology is called the science of religion, which it is not, and pretends to treat of man, God, and the relation between man and God, with the duties which grow out of the relation. But as a matter of fact theology is no science at all, but a system of incoherent notions, woven together by a scholastic logic, and resting on baseless assumptions. It is not studied as true science is, with no concern except for the truth of the conclusion. Only what is desired is sought for. This Christian theology of today has two great idols—the Bible and Christ—and these it worships. This theology relies on assumptions, not ultimate facts, which it has not, and so comes to no certain conclusions. It weaves cobwebs, not cloth. It catches the flies of humanity in its web, and its professional spiders, the priests and ministers, feed and fatten on them.'

'Do you think theologians—that is, the priests and ministers—are conscious of the untenableness of their position?' asked Cluney, with just a tinge of sarcasm.

‘As a rule, I doubt if they are. They do not take the trouble to think of the matter, or dare not investigate it in any but a believing spirit, so strong is authority in the minds of such men. But I am treating of the thinkers among them—the weavers of the theological meshes in which the human mind is ensnared. Theologians have assumed their facts, and then reasoned as if the facts were established; but the conclusion was an inference from a baseless assumption. Thus it accounts for nothing. “We only become certain of the immortality of the soul from the fact of Christ’s resurrection,” says theology. Here are two assumptions; first, the fact of that resurrection, and, second, that it proves our immortality. If we ask proof of the first point, it is not in existence in a rational, reliable form; of the second, it can not be shown. The theological method is as false as the theory on which it is based; for it does not prove the facts historically, or verify its conclusions philosophically.’

‘I admit that it requires some faith for the acceptance of the fact of the resurrection,’ said Cluney. ‘But are there not things that transcend our knowledge happening all the time?’

‘Yes; there are many things, such as the force which impels the planets in their orbits, systems in their courses, and the laws governing such vast movements, that we probably never can know, or can only guess at in the vaguest way. But there are things which can be investigated, and the truth in regard to them ascertained. We have applied our common sense to the things of life with more or less of success, and make improvements in science and art every year. We investigate and study the

phenomena of nature to learn facts, and we do gain them. Science, being a collection and arrangement of ascertained facts, will not permit the acceptance of conclusions based on false assumptions, as theology would have us do.'

'You reject the idea of God, then—a supreme power?' suggested Cluney.

'We reject the idea of a personal God—certainly,' replied Seaver. 'But not the idea of a Supreme Power. This, no one having any conception of the forces of nature, and their operation, could for a moment deny. The Christian, and in fact every other, God, is a being, an entity, an organism. As such, he must have a location, an environment, and can be in one place only at a time, but we are told that he is everywhere, sees and knows all things, not only in the present and past, but things to come. The absurdity of this is so transparent to my mind that I have little patience with it. Now what is the popular idea of God? Most people conceive God to be a huge man in shape. I do not recall who it was who said it, but it illustrates my point. He said the average Englishman's idea of God was a big, majestic episcopal bishop! Xenophanes, the Greek, shows how old this idea of god is, for he says of lions, horses, and oxen, that "if they had hands wherewith to grave images, they would fashion gods after their own shapes and make them bodies like their own"—would in fact, impose their limitations on the Supreme Power of the universe, just as man has done.'

'Do you not believe in what is called religion?' asked the persevering school-master, who seemed bent on catechising.

The improved theology of today says religion is love of God and man. Strike out the word God, and I accept it. Nay, I would go farther, and say: Humanity is my God, and to do all I can to help it my religion. This is, you may know, paraphrasing Thomas Paine's declaration: "The world is my country, and to do good my religion." As to the great formative energy of the universe, which appears to be self-regulating, I, as a result of one of its processes, do not see wherein my relation to it can be so well expressed and carried out as by dealing with and helping my fellow creatures. I have nothing to fear from this magnificent All-power in the future any more than in the past. My existence to me is everything—to the vast storehouse of energy out of which it came, scarcely an incident of more significance than the breath of a spring morning, or the life of a May-fly. Then why should I look for immortality—a life beyond this one? I see nothing to justify such an expectation, beyond the unreasoning and unreasonable hopes of foolish and selfish people. People will say: Why should we die and be ended—so much of goodness, wisdom, virtue? But why should these attributes be perpetuated in the few, and the vice, the villainy, the infernal devilishness of character in the many not also be perpetuated? The beauty of the good and the virtuous fades as the flowers of summer, in its time. That glorious piece of mechanism, the human form, becomes old, decrepid, diseased—why should this be? It is the course of nature, we say. Yes, and 'tis the course of nature to die and be ended. Why not? Do we know to the contrary? All we can know is found on this side of death, and our reason tells us death ends all.'

‘Then heaven and hell are myths, as well as immortality?’ asked Cluney.

‘Heaven and hell,’ replied Seaver, ‘are said to be up and down, respectively. Up where? Down where? Up is above the earth; down, in the earth. If heaven is above, it is in the clouds, or beyond, and hell in the hot bowels of the earth. At the equator our earth turns around on its axis at the rate of one thousand miles an hour—that is pretty fast traveling. But it is as nothing to the orbital velocity of the earth itself, which, according to the best astronomical authority, is nearly nineteen miles a second.

‘Our earth has still another motion; it follows the sun in its course, as the moon follows our’s. This motion of the sun, which we share, is, I am told, some 20,000 miles an hour; and in how many other ways our gyrating course through space is effected it would be difficult to say; but we are evidently describing a series of circles, which make our movements very complex indeed.

‘Here we are, then, on a globe or sphere, eight thousand miles in diameter, which we call the earth, swinging and whirling and gyrating through space at a velocity twenty times greater than that of our swiftest projectile, with our up or heavenward direction changing at the rate of a mile in about every four seconds, and yet we point up and up to space beyond as our heaven! Well, the thing is no more preposterous than the idea of heaven itself, with immortality of what is called the soul included. We Infidels claim to have the brains to see this condition of things and the courage to accept its consequences.’

‘It is curious and strange,’ said Cluney, reflectively. ‘Here you are, with apparently all the spirit that would

do and suffer, attacking established religion—tearing its most sacred traditions to shreds—to establish and perpetuate which thousands have willingly suffered martyrdom, and for which thousands are still ready to offer their lives! Is it not strange indeed?’

‘They were noble fellows, those martyrs, for they were no doubt honest and sincere in their belief, and of course that same heroic spirit still survives. I could honor their courage, but not their hallucination. I could commend their fortitude, but that is no reason why I should not condemn the colossal lie which they believe in. I pity the mistaken immolation of the worshippers of Hindoo Juggernaut, who prostrate themselves before the wheels of that car of Vishnu, and achieve what they believe to be a glorious death and immortality; but this would all the more make me denounce the monstrous thing which they believe in too faithfully and to their destruction.’

After some further conversation, in which Tom bore a part, the friends took their leave of Mr. Seaver, with thanks for his courtesy.

On the way homeward, Tom asked Cluney:

‘How were you impressed with my friend Seaver?’

‘In some respects I should call him a remarkable man, but I think he has chosen a peculiar calling to make a living by.’

‘What do you mean by that remark?’ asked Tom.

‘Simply this. While you may regard him as a kind of apostle of free thought, I am not at all sure but he is what he is, partly from a naturally combative disposition and in part to make a living. In other words, I regard him as a “professional Infidel.” He is able, bright, and

no doubt as sincere as a soldier of fortune would be who would fight in any cause—the first that presented.’

‘But his present position is one of choice, as I understand,’ said Tom, ‘and not because of lack of opportunity for remunerative employment in other lines of effort.’

‘Tom,’ said Cluney, stopping suddenly, and facing his companion, ‘why don’t you become a professional Infidel? You seem to be in full sympathy with these people.’

‘I have several reasons,’ was the reply, ‘most of which I need not tell you; they are selfish ones. But my main reason is that I so love to be my own master, to own myself, to keep my individuality intact, that I would join no organization where my actions would be governed or hampered by others, or identify myself with a movement that I did not wholly believe in.’

‘Then you do not subscribe to the doctrine of Infidelity?’

‘I subscribe to no doctrine but my own, and that is all the time changing in its details,’ said Tom, laughing. ‘But I am willing to give a helping hand to all whom I believe to be honestly contending for the truth. I want to be a “free lance.”’

‘Truth!’ said Cluney reflectively. ‘That is a much misunderstood word, or the majority of people are fools. It would seem to be simple enough in itself, but when we see people contending about it—not that one should get it from the other, as in the contention of dogs over a bone, but that one should compel the other to accept his version of it—that is strange indeed! Do you think there is only one kind of truth in the world, or that it can be found only in certain places, like piety? Truth, with men generally, has as many complexions as their

minds have, and is crude, half-developed, or comparatively rational according as their conception of it is developed.'

'That may be so,' replied Tom, 'but what I mean is, that where I find a vast system of what is called religion, founded on manifest ignorance of natural laws, the truth with regard to which laws we know enough of to controvert their assumptions of infallibility and immortality, and I find men with the courage to deny these assumptions and speak the truth regarding them, I feel like giving them aid and comfort. I think it is my duty as a man to do it.'

'How are you going to do it, Tom? You cannot convince people, by argument, who will not listen to you.'

'I know it, and that is one reason why I would not become a professional Infidel, as you term it. As such, I would not be listened to. As a simple individual, I can do more good for humanity. I am well aware of the fact that the church has control of the people, and the moulding of them from the cradle onward. It works not only through its ministers, but more potently through the believing mothers. Indeed, I have no doubt that with mothers the controlling influence exists before the birth of their offspring, and when they are in a condition of the most peculiar susceptibility to all abnormal impressions and influences. Then, after birth, when the child begins to learn and understand, the mother gives him his first lessons in superstition, fully believing that she is doing him a grand service; telling him, for example that "the fear of the Lord is beginning of all wisdom." Why fear? Why not love? Well, because God is supposed to be grand and terrible; and is clothed in the

thunder of the elements, with forked lightning in his hands and a frown on his face, ready to blast and to destroy all who do not practice the most abject form of submission and supplication towards him,—the real submission being practically to priestcraft.

‘From the cradle to the grave the church takes control of the man; and even beyond the grave it claims to influence his fate—an absurd and wicked pretension! Do you imagine that I do not appreciate the bonds and fetters which the church has woven around the lives of men—bonds for the restraint of free inquiry; fetters for their minds? A man may burst the manacles of steel which the law puts on him, if he has the physical strength to do it, but the manacles of the church can not be broken except by the strength of will which few men possess. There is an awful penalty attached by the Catholic church to unbelief, and most men are fearful of it.’

‘Then,’ said Cluney, ‘why resist so potent an influence? The Catholic church is the repository of all the ethical religion to be found in all the dissenting creeds, with excellent practices which they have not—usages which tone the moral system and keep men up to a point of high moral conduct, if their nature is capable of it. It will condone transgression only on the true repentance of the transgressor. It will not, like many Protestant churches, shut the gates of mercy on the repentant sinner. At the same time, you may understand, the Catholic church is more tolerant than any other. You may think as you please, and doubt as much as you will, if you do not seek to openly propagate your views and oppose the teachings of the church, you can still remain in the fold, and settle with the Great Reckoner. I may

confess to you that I am, in my own person, an example of this. I think quite as freely now as you do, and there was a time when I thought as strongly. But time has sobered me, and, seeing the futility of making a struggle, I have accepted the situation; and my pathway is smooth and peaceful.'

'I could not do that,' said Tom. 'It would be against my nature. I could not be one thing and seem to be another. I must be free, and I will be, the church to the contrary notwithstanding.'

'Believe me, Tom, the church can get along without you, and will not interfere with your humor in the matter. But can you get along without the social amenities of religion? You will find it a difficult thing to do.'

'Well,' said Tom, 'I will make the trial.'

'I have no doubt of it,' rejoined Cluney, and the friends proceeded homeward.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW ARRIVAL — RICHARD GASTON GOES TO ROME.

It is possible that the reader may desire more of incident and less of opinion, and, presuming that to be the case, we will gloss over the things heard by Tom Gaston and his guest at the Sunday services which they attended on the day succeeding the events recorded in the last chapter.

In the forenoon they heard Theodore Parker, in the lower hall of Music Hall — the Melodeon. His theme

was human slavery, the great national sin of America. His denunciation of slavery was grand, earnest, and even fierce; and the applause that frequently greeted his utterances was a thing so strange and so unexpected to Cluney that he turned to his friend and remarked:

‘Tom, do they applaud him when he prays?’

‘Yes,’ replied Tom, ‘when he makes a good hit.’

‘At what?’

‘At anything — the devil, or the Catholic church, for example,’ returned Tom, with a chuckle.

At the close of the sermon, and on the way to dinner, Cluney remarked:

‘Your Theodore Parker is a wonderfully effective speaker, with all the art of an orator, to which he adds an intense earnestness and feeling. He is a born leader, but his head is too large and vigorous for his body, and will wear it out. His denunciation of slavery was one of the grandest I have ever heard. It was a noble protest against an execrable institution — a strong and manly denunciation of a thing that is a most glaring and shameful anomaly in a country that has for its central principle of government human freedom.’

In the evening the friends visited Father Taylor’s Bethel, in North square. The attendance was not large, and the venerable and eccentric minister was not in the best of humor, perhaps for that reason. His talk was, of course, mainly directed to seamen, to warn them of the dangers from ‘land sharks’ and loose women, and also showing them that the only safe harbor of refuge was with Jesus. He was a man of medium size, somewhat fleshy, with a strong, earnest face, and long white hair. His speech was bluff even to affectation, but vigorous

and full of homely aphorisms appropriate to his purpose.

An incident occurred which amused the friends greatly. One of those well-meaning but sententious men — a merchant of the West End of the city — who thought he felt an interest in the seamen, rose in response to an invitation to the hearers from Father Taylor, after his discourse, to testify in behalf of good works, and proceeded to tell how much the merchants had done for the sailors, and how thankful the latter should be for what was done in their behalf.

Father Taylor listened to this man with evident impatience, and finally said: ‘Belay, there, brother; you have let out enough of that slack.’ Then, when the merchant sat down, he called out: ‘Is there any other old sinner present who desires to say anything?’ The effect of the rebuke was electrical, and brought smiles to the faces of all present, save that of the speaker who called it down.

‘Well,’ said Cluney, as the friends wended their way through carousing Ann street, homeward: ‘Father Taylor is a character indeed. He is one of those earnest, sincere men who despise hypocrisy, and no doubt accomplishes a vast amount of good in his way. He is a fine rugged character, and under different conditions might become a despot or revolutionist, an anchorite or a man of the world.’

‘He is a good, honest man, no doubt,’ replied Tom; ‘but it tires me to listen to this old song of ‘come to Jesus,’ instead of appealing to the manly principle in human nature — the pride rather than the fear; but of course this is the stock in trade of exhorters.’

On the day following, that is, Monday, Tom received

a letter from his brother in Montreal. Richard was on the eve of starting for Rome, and on the way would call on his dear brother in Boston.

‘This is news, indeed,’ said Tom to Cluney, ‘and good news. We should have Dick here now at any time, perhaps today, for this letter was evidently received here on Saturday, and not delivered till to-day. The fact is, I forgot to call on Saturday for my mail.’

And, sure enough, that very afternoon Richard arrived in Boston, and at once repaired to his brother’s boarding place. He had changed somewhat during his sojourn in college, was paler, and had taken on the indescribable habit of countenance peculiar to the theological student. With a full-fledged cleric — priest or minister — the term sanctimonious expresses it, but with the novice it is less pronounced. Whether it be a reflection of the inward mind, or whether, chameleon-like, it is the result of an imitation growing out of association, it is hard to say; but whatever its cause, it is pronounced and distinctive, and easily recognized by men of experience, especially those who have traveled in Catholic countries.

The meeting between the brothers was very warm and affectionate, and Master Cluney beheld it with tears in his eyes, and somewhat the feeling of a father in his heart, for both had been pupils of his, and he knew them to be bright, honest boys, though curiously different in many respects, mentally as well as physically.

The reader has all along been compelled to picture to himself one of the most interesting characters of this narrative, Thomas Gaston. I think it not a bad idea, however, to give the reader an opportunity to imagine the kind of man a character is by the way he talks and acts.

In the present case, it would perhaps be more striking to describe him by contrast, for the reason that in the two brothers were strongly exemplified two distinctive types of the races of Europe—northern and southern—which, one would suppose, should have been blended in them.

While there was a resemblance between the brothers, when seen together, it would be difficult to say in what it consisted. Richard was tall, large-boned, with light-blue eyes, light brown hair, and stright nose, with wide nostrils—an almost typical Saxon in appearance, such as is often found among the Irish people, indicating the mixture of races in Ireland similar to that found in Great Britain. Richard had regular features, fair skin, a round face, and was really a handsome fellow.

Thomas was of medium height and build, with a well-knit frame, whose every movement indicated a vigor that seemed to be constantly held in check. His forehead was high and broad, with dark-shaded brows, hanging like beetling cliffs of observation well out above his eyes, which were full and of a changing black—eyes that, on occasion, would glow like opals or darken into fiery jets; an aquiline nose, finely shaped, with flaring nostrils; a firm, well-shaped mouth, strong chin, and jaws indicating a persistent and unyielding disposition. His hair was black and inclined to curl, and his complexion was a clear olive. He was French, with an English expression of solidity and earnestness; with the fiery courage of the one, backed by the cool determination of the other.

While there were characteristics apparent in both brothers that would command attention, they were of a nature peculiar to each. Richard had not the strong facial characteristics of his brother, and, though evidently

not lacking in firmness, was yet of that easy, good-natured disposition that could be changed in purpose,—that would not as steadily pursue a purpose as his brother. Thomas, on the other hand, gave the impression that he was a man great of firmness and decision of character, and of unbending will and purpose. His eyes were searching and speculative, and strongly indicated that he was not a man to be trifled with. Richard had a mild and pleasant expression of eye, and appeared to be one of those men from whom only kindness and good nature was to be expected.

In the pleasure of meeting, however, the brothers seemed transfigured in so far that each appeared to be a composite of both, in the light and sparkle of the eye, and the gentle glow of brotherly affection which spread over the faces of both, harmonizing and blending their peculiar characteristics. It was a case where the gentler and more stern attributes of manhood, under the warmth of consanguinal affection, were melted into homogeneous identity.

‘And now, Dick,’ said Thomas, ‘tell us what favoring turn in the wheel of good luck has caused you to fold your tent on the banks of the majestic St. Lawrence and come to Boston just at the time when my Mentor—our mutual friend, our good Master Cluney—was on a visit of exploration among the caves of piety and dens of unbelief which abound in this wicked Yankee metropolis?’

‘I’ll tell you, in a few words,’ replied Richard. ‘I had heard of the eclat, the distinction, it gave to a priest in Canada to have been ordained at Rome, and, as I did not intend to become a member of the Society of Jesus, and desired to visit Europe, and especially the holy city of

Rome, I made up my mind to take this course, and here I am in pursuance of it.'

'Will you go home before crossing the water?' asked Cluney.

'No,' replied Richard. 'For obvious reasons, it would be best not to go there now, though I should like to see my dear mother and father. Tom, you ought to go down and see them.'

'I shall,' said Tom, 'after I obtain my degree. In a year from now I hope to go there, and spend a week or two amid the old familiar scenes. But, Dick, my dear boy, are you still determined to be a priest? Can't you go to Europe and see all you want to, and return and do something else? You are an expert accountant, and could easily get a good position in some counting room in Boston.'

'It cannot be. I could not endure the disappointment it would be to mother; and, then, think of the talk it would make if I returned home a layman instead of a priest. Then— But, what's the use of talking? The die is cast—I must go, even if I did have some mis-giving about the matter.'

'How long before you leave?' asked Cluney, with the purpose of diverting the direction of the conversation, which seemed to pain Richard:

'I understand the steamer leaves on Wednesday next—day after tomorrow—and as I have some purchases to make, many letters to write, and a good deal to see in Boston, as well as much to talk of with both of you, about home and personal matters, I do not think I will have much idle time on hand. I have a letter to Bishop Fitzpatrick, and will call on him tomorrow, and I have

several commissions for the students of the college at Montreal to execute. I expect a letter of introduction from the Bishop that will aid me at Rome.'

'I will do what I can to aid you in your business,' said Tom, 'but in regard to the visit to the Bishop' —

'In regard to that,' interrupted Cluney, 'you will of course be too busy, and as I will have ample leisure, I can devote it to going around with your brother, so you need not trouble about that.'

Cluney then briefly explained what Tom was engaged in, and the necessity of his being on hand at the newspaper office every day to do the work allotted to him. Several times during this first meeting of the brothers the conversation led to the subject of religion, when Cluney, in a diplomatic way, contrived to avert an issue between them on this matter, and when the first opportunity occurred, Richard being absent for a few minutes, Cluney said to his brother:

'Tom, I beg of you not to bring up religious matters for discussion with Richard. It will only lead to controversy, and such things are not productive of good. You cannot influence him in regard to the profession he has chosen, and a disagreement between you at this time on a matter so vital to him might have consequences that would give your brother pain and would leave you only regret.'

'I thank you, my dear Cluney, for this kind advice, and will follow it, though I shall dislike more than ever the church that separates my only brother from me, for I feel that we can never come together again with that old time cordiality that we could if he had not become a priest.'

‘And why not?’ asked Cluney. ‘He will still be your brother, and will still love you as a brother. He is of an affectionate nature, and in the office he is going to assume, with the peculiar work it calls for, he will be all the better, and can bear his cross all the more bravely, if he can feel that he has the affection of blood and kindred to sustain him in his relation to the world.’

‘I shall never cease to love him, even if he becomes one of that class who regard all men as sinners and all in need of “saving grace,” especially one like myself, who will be cut off from the church by censure for daring to think for myself and express my views. But will he, under the circumstances, love me — the outcast? That is what troubles me,’ said Tom.

‘I stake my life that he will,’ said Cluney. ‘He has too much of the genuine good nature and affection of his mother to ever go back on you, even if you have gone back on the church of which he is a priest. No — I would sooner count on his forbearance in such a position than on yours, if you were in his place, Tom.’

‘Would you?’ asked Tom, laughing. ‘Why?’

‘Tom,’ said Cluney, ‘with your positive nature, you would be inclined to intolerance; Richard, on the contrary, would be inclined to forbearance. If you were a sincerely-believing priest — and I know you would never be one if you were not sincere — you would illustrate Butler’s distich in his Hudibras :

“The pulpit-drum ecclesiastic,

Was beat with fist instead of a stick.”

‘You would be inclined to polemics, while Richard would take to works of benevolence and charity.

‘I guess you are about right,’ said Tom. ‘Poor Dick

I feel sorry for him, and it makes me mad when I think of the peculiar fate which has driven him to this alternative, him who would have made such a model family man, while I, who care not a fig for women or domestic life, have nothing to thwart me, and drive me from the course I would pursue. Well, it is a queer world, and I suspect, we are all parts of a vast mass of contrarieties.'

The evening was pleasantly spent in Thomas Gaston's room, Cluney being present. The brothers talked of their earlier days, their parents, home and friends. Tom did not venture to touch on Richard's love affair, or speak of the Wardens, except casually. He did ask, however, if Richard would, when ordained, settle in the home Province, or come to the States.

'That is a matter,' said Richard, 'which I have not yet decided. My preference would be to return to my native place and take up my life work among the people there—I know them and many of their peculiarities, and think I would like them better than the Yankées to live amongst.'

'Probably you would,' remarked Tom, 'but my choice would be with the Yankees, who are a wide-awake people and fairly civilized. Will you go directly home after ordination?'

'I cannot say,' replied Richard. 'My purpose is, however, to visit some of the countries of Europe, which I will be enabled to do to some satisfaction, for I have become somewhat proficient in the French language—not the patois of the Provinces, but the tongue of modern France. A knowledge of this language will enable a person to travel anywhere on the Continent of Europe, without having to carry an interpreter with him.'

‘I would like to be a companion for you,’ said Tom. ‘We could take a Bohemian tramp through Bohemia.’

‘And I would like to form the third one of a party of which you two would be the parties of the other part,’ said Cluney.

‘A good Mentor you would be, I am sure,’ said Richard, ‘and I would like to go with you and Tom, in a most unconventional way, but not like Goldsmith, when he gathered materials for his “Traveller.” We could have a famous good time going through Italy, Spain and France, tracing the course of empire westward, from the old Roman civilization.’

‘Yes,’ said Tom, ‘it would be rare pastime to travel over the ground which the nations of Europe have cultivated, fought over, conquered from one another, and where death has conquered them — that is, all the old ones. What a study the ruins of vast amphitheatres, like the Coliseum at Rome, where the half savage consuls and emperors sat and made men kill one another for their amusement; the ruins of the great castles where feudal chiefs of old levied tribute like true highwaymen on all who passed over their domains; and the remains of churches and cathedrals, mossy and ivy-grown; what a study these skeleton remains of an old civilization, a condition of society which has passed away very largely, would be. I often, in dreams, find myself amid such ruins, viewing them and philosophizing in regard to them. It always seems a fixed reality, and what is also strange, I seem to view all such things in a moonlit atmosphere.’

‘Perhaps,’ remarked Cluney, ‘Scott’s description of Melrose Abbey, in “The Lay of the Last Minstrel,” may

have influenced your mind to wander by moonlight, in dreams. You, of course, remember how it begins?’

“If thou wouldst view fair Melrose aright,
Go visit it by the pale moonlight.”

‘That may be so,’ returned Tom, ‘though, as a matter of fact, I recall the circumstance that all incidents of my dreams occur in a mellow kind of moonlight, as if a haze were in the atmosphere.’

‘I can recognize the same peculiarity in my dreams,’ remarked Richard.

‘And I acknowledge to the same experience. It is curious that I never noted it before,’ said Cluney.

‘It appears to be a clear case of lunaey all around,’ said Tom. ‘But to return to Dick’s purposes for the future: When do you aim to return to America, Dick?’

‘I hope to be able to return some time in May or June next,’ was the reply.

‘Well, if all things are propitious, I will go down home about the middle of July, next year. I do not expect to secure anything like a regular practice in my profession as early as that, though I shall have my sign out this coming winter. I shall be glad to go down at the time when you have returned home as a dignitary of the church — a priest.’

‘It will be a pleasure to me to have you come home while I am there. I know that both mother and father would be delighted to have both of us at home together, even if you could not stay permanently.’

‘And I should be delighted to see you both there,’ said Cluney. ‘It would be a delight all around.’

The following day Cluney accompanied Richard on his visit to the Bishop, and to fill the business errands

intrusted to him. Tom was busy at the office. During their companionship, Richard inquired in regard to his brother's religious views, and Cluney told him frankly the state of Tom's mind.

‘It is a painful thing for me to know,’ said Richard.

‘Yes,’ replied Cluney, ‘but you can do nothing to help it. Tom is just as honest and sincere in his convictions as you are, and the only thing to do is to wait and trust to time, and his own good sense.’

‘Do you think he is likely to embrace Protestantism?’ asked Richard.

‘Dick,’ said Cluney, ‘there appears to be no middle course for an honest Catholic doubter between Catholicism and Infidelity. Many stop off at the half-way house of Protestantism — why, I could never see. After a taste of our church and its rituals; its sculpture, painting and architecture, and its poetry and music; and the mind is not thoroughly weaned from religion; Protestantism furnishes but a sorry substitute; and, when weaned, it cares for neither. Say nothing to him about religion, at least at present.’

‘I will not,’ said Richard, ‘but I shall pray for a change of heart for him. But no matter what may come, I will never turn against him.’

‘That is right. No matter how your opinions and tastes may differ, never forget the ties of blood. They are sacred.’

The evening was spent at the theatre, the brothers and their friend enjoying themselves greatly.

The hour of departure came on the following afternoon, Tom and Cluney going over to East Boston to see Richard on board the steamer and wish him safe voyage.

The parting between the brothers was most affecting, both shedding tears, and it is safe to say that while the steamer was in sight the eyes of neither one were free from the moisture of affection.

‘Well,’ remarked Cluney, ‘Dick has chosen his life vocation. I am not sure, had I been consulted, that I should have selected him for a priest. He is good and gentle, honest and sincere, but I doubt if he likes the profession he has chosen. And I may say I do not think any man who has been disappointed in love affairs should assume holy orders. The church may do well as a refuge for a disappointed man well along in years. But — well, let us hope for the best.’

‘Perhaps it is as well,’ replied Tom, who appeared more than usually thoughtful, and the friends returned to Boston, and prepared to resume the amusements — if such they may be called — which were interrupted by the advent of Richard.

CHAPTER IX.

CHEBUCTO HAPPENINGS — RECONCILIATION OF WARDEN AND GASTON — RICHARD TO BE RECALLED.

The Warden family assembled, as usual, on an August evening, around the tea table. It was of a Wednesday evening, and, by an odd coincidence, was the identical one on which Richard Gaston sailed from Boston.

Mrs. Warden was a comely matron, about forty-five years of age, with a French face and style of beauty,

made quite notable by a magnificent growth of black, silken hair, which crowned her head like a diadem, and which was made all the more striking by the scintillating streaks of silvery threads running through it. Her eyes were of a deep blue color, with long black lashes, and eyebrows of the same color. Her face was oval, and her complexion a clear white. Her face had a soft, pleasing womanly expression, but did not indicate strength or decision of character.

James Warden was a man about fifty years of age — of about medium size, stout and strongly built, with a round head, a thick neck, and was altogether of a sturdy appearance. His face was full, eyes light gray, complexion florid, with nose inclining to the pug form, and heavy, strong jaws. His hair had been of a reddish color, but was now a rusty iron gray.

Agnes Warden was taller than either parent, and was an almost exact counterpart of what her mother undoubtedly was at her age. She had the same deep blue eyes, which, however, took on a different expression under long golden lashes, while the same magnificent wealth of hair possessed by her mother crowned her own head, only it was of a golden tint. It was such hair, in fact, as the old Italian painters delighted to represent on canvas.

Agnes had a more earnest face, with much more character in it. That is, it was expressive. It showed a strong nature, that would suffer and endure, but would not succumb. On the evening in question, Agnes was more pensive than usual.

Mr. Warden's usually stolid face on this particular evening showed more than ordinary worry and trouble,

and it was known to his wife and daughter that he had met with a reverse in the loss of one of his ships, on which there was no insurance.

‘Have you heard any more unpleasant news today, James?’ asked Mrs. Warden, as she passed him the tea.

‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘the brig *Midas*, I learn, is ashore in the Gut of Canso, and they say she is “hogged.” She left here just a week ago to-day with a load of lumber, and struck on a sand bar at half tide. The wind was fresh, and what with the pounding and lowering of the tide, combined with the weight of lumber, she quickly became “hogged,” as it is called—and I doubt if she will ever amount to much. If she had been a total loss, I would recover the insurance; for I had her well insured before sailing. But if they can float her, and she crosses the water, her sale is lost, and I will not get my insurance. It will put me in a tight place, I fear, following the loss of the ship.’

‘What,’ said Mrs. Warden, ‘is the situation really serious?’

‘It is, Mary.’

‘I hope you do not fear bankruptcy, James,’ said Mrs. Warden, turning a shade paler than usual.

‘That is just what I do fear. My business has been falling off of late. The vessels I built have not brought good prices in the home market. My traders have hardly paid expenses in the last two years. My best ship is a total loss, with her cargo, a third of which was mine. It was last year’s oats, and would have commanded good prices at home at this season of the year. Well, the luck seems to be against me.’

Agnes listened to this conversation without making

any comment or betraying any interest in it. Her mind seemed preoccupied. Her mother noticed this curious lack of interest concerning the vital matters talked of, and appeared to feel irritated at it.

‘It does not seem to affect Agnes any,’ she said, half speaking to her. ‘She seems not to care whether we are ruined or not.’

‘Ruined,’ said Agnes, repeating the word; ‘who is ruined?’

‘We are—that is, your father is,’ was the reply.

‘I hope not,’ said Agnes. ‘What is it, father?’

He explained the situation to her. ‘It looks gloomy,’ he said, ‘but it is not as desperate as your mother thinks. Even if it comes to worst, and I should fail, I will have enough to satisfy all demands and something besides. As it is, if I had a thousand pounds I could soon put matters to rights, for I could finish the two vessels now on the stocks and meet all demands.’

‘A thousand pounds,’ said Agnes, ‘and are you sure that amount would get you over your trouble?’

‘Yes, indeed. I shall receive five thousand pounds in about two months for the barque *Medusa*, which will be turned over to the purchaser in Liverpool when she returns from her Mediterranean voyage. With that money in hand, I could meet every obligation, but in the mean time I shall need, in addition to collections—and they come in slowly—about a thousand pounds.’

‘Can you not borrow it?’ asked Agnes.

‘I have made the effort—have tried every one I know or would ask—without success. They all say they are in want of money themselves. There is only one man I have not been to, and I would not ask a favor of him,

not even a simple one, with any expectation of obtaining it. Why, then, should I ask him for one like this?’

‘And that man is —’

‘Richard Gaston,’ he said, bitterly.

‘Of course you could give good security for a loan,’ suggested Agnes.

‘The best in Chebucto,’ he replied.

Agnes said no more, and the supper was finished in silence.

Now let us look into the Gaston household. Richard Gaston sat beside a table in his parlor, and his wife was seated opposite. Mrs. Gaston was a woman in the neighborhood of fifty; tall, for a woman, rather stout, and thoroughly good-natured and motherly in appearance. Her light-brown hair had begun to turn white at the roots, which rather added to her matronly appearance. Looking at her, one could easily trace whence her son Richard derived his characteristics. In Richard Gaston, on the other hand, could be traced the original of Tom Gaston, whom we have just left in Boston, in company with his Mentor. Mr. Gaston was some years the senior of his wife, and his hair was plentifully sprinkled with gray. His black eyes had not lost their brightness, but there was in them a look of kindness—a mellowness, as in old wine. The fires of passion in them had been subdued, and a kindly light alone remained. While his general expression was one of kindliness, Richard Gaston would impress one as being a man of energy and decision, from whom justice would be accorded and by whom it would be demanded. His honorable, upright character shone in his face. From his appearance, in fact, he would be the last man that one would

suspect of a mean action. Mrs. Gaston had two open letters before her.

‘Well, Richard, our boy is going to Rome. It will be a grand event in his life; and he will see the Pope, and St. Peter’s church, and the cardinals. And then to think of his being made a priest in Rome! It will be a great event for us.’

‘I’m half inclined to disagree with you,’ said Mr. Gaston. ‘I do not think it is a great event for either him or us. But I suppose we must accept it as the inevitable, though I could wish the boy a better fate.’

‘What better could you wish him?’ asked the mother.

‘It would be better for him to remain at home and succeed me in my business, which has prospered greatly in the past two years.’

‘I have no doubt there is one other in Chebucto who thinks as you do, though she says never a word of it. Agnes Warden is an angel, and, though she tries not to betray it, I can see that she still loves Richard. I sometimes feel sad when I look at her, and see how her life has been clouded by the obstinacy of her father; it makes me almost regret that Richard was so precipitate in deciding as he did. Poor girl! I doubt if she will ever marry. She’s had several good offers of marriage in the past two years, but refused all. They say her father has met with some bad losses of late. If she had only accepted young Dawson, who is quite well off, she might be in a position to help her father.’

‘Yes. I think Warden is hard pushed for means. I hear he has been trying to borrow money for the past week, without success. And yet he has ample security

to offer. The fact is, he seems to have but few friends in town.'

'Richard, would you not be willing to help him out by a loan?' asked the wife. 'It would be terrible to see that girl reduced to poverty now; she who has been so well and tenderly reared.'

'I would help him out, I think, if he asked me,' replied Mr. Gaston. 'But I know his stubborn nature too well to think he would do it.'

'But, Richard dear, would you not go so far as to make him an offer of assistance? It would be a Christian act on your part.'

'I would do so,' was the reply; 'but I know he would refuse it, perhaps insolently, and I should be loath to invite such treatment from him.'

Taking up the other letter Mrs. Gaston said, with a sigh:

'Tom tells us in this letter that he is expecting Master Cluney by the next boat, and will write more when he arrives. He always seems in a hurry when he writes us. Says he will graduate at next term, when he will begin the practice of a doctor in Boston. I wish he would come home and settle down with us. He could soon have a good practice here.'

'Tom,' said Mr. Gaston, 'is ambitious, and feels that the field is too narrow for him here. I wonder how he gets along in Boston, and what he does to get a living. I would like to learn of his habits there.'

'I am hopeful, and yet I fear for him,' said the mother. 'His free thinking disposition is something that alarms me. I hope he is engaged in nothing bad. He is naturally truthful, honest, and' —

‘Fear nothing for Tom, wife. He is too frank and courageous to engage in any bad course of life, and too honorable to be dishonest. As to his free thinking, it will not hurt him. I had my share of it when I was a young man, and it has not hurt me, though I am not perhaps so devout a Catholic as some. But I make it all right with Father Tom. Ducats in exchange for the consolations of religion! Well, we are none the worse for the exchange, anyhow; especially the priest. I suppose Master Cluney will enlighten us regarding the radical, when he returns?’

‘Yes. I made him promise to find out what Tom was doing, and use his influence to turn him from the error of his ways,’ said Mrs. Gaston.

‘He will have a tough subject in Tom, I can assure you. You remember what Father Tom told us about his controversy with him when last home — about God and the devil. Tom is a positive fellow’ —

‘Yes, just like you were, years ago.’

‘Only much more so. Well, we must be patient with him, and allow him to work out the problem in his own way.’

At this point of the conversation a servant announced a visitor — Agnes Warden. She had been a regular caller on Mrs. Gaston in the daytimes, but rarely came in the evening. She was greeted most affectionately by Mrs. Gaston, and received a cordial welcome from Mr. Gaston.

‘Agnes,’ he said, ‘we were just talking about the boys, having had letters from both to-day. Tom’s letter is short, as usual. Dick writes a long one. He is about to start for’ — he paused, and his wife finished the sentence.

‘For Rome,’ she said, ‘to be ordained.’

Agnes turned her head away from the light for a moment, and then inquired if he was quite well. She was many shades paler than before, and both Mr. and Mrs. Gaston had noted her unusual paleness on entering, but of course made no remark about it.

After talking about Richard and Tom for some time, Agnes turned to Mr. Gaston, and asked him if he had heard of her father’s embarrassment. He replied that he had; was truly sorry for it, and would be glad to help him out of his difficulties.

‘I asked Richard not more than ten minutes ago,’ said Mrs. Gaston, ‘if he would be willing to help your father, and he said he would, if asked by him. He, however, judged your father would not ask for aid, and I suggested that he proffer it to him. He said he would even do that, but he did not like to risk a refusal.’

‘How much money does your father want?’ asked Mr. Gaston.

‘A thousand pounds,’ replied Agnes. ‘He says that will tide him over his trouble, and he can give ample security for it.’

‘I know he can,’ said Mr. Gaston.

‘He has not commissioned me to ask you for it,’ said Agnes, ‘but I have come of my own impulse. I wanted to learn if you would be favorable to helping him out.’

‘I will do it, gladly,’ responded Mr. Gaston.

‘God in Heaven bless you,’ exclaimed Agnes, rising from her seat, and bringing her hands together above her head, in the devotional manner of the church.

‘I can let you have the money to-night — now,’ said the generous man.

‘But, the security?’ she asked. ‘What of it?’

‘I want no security beyond your father’s acknowledgment. In fact, I will not even ask that. Let it be a debt of honor.’

‘O this is generous!’ said Agnes, with tears streaming down her cheeks. ‘It is magnanimous, princely! But I will not take it to-night. I will see my father, and tell him what you will do. He cannot refuse aid so generously offered. Mr. Gaston, you are a true Christian, and you,’ she said, wringing the good wife’s hands, ‘you are an angel!’

‘Just what I said of you less than half an hour ago,’ said the benevolent woman. ‘And now go and tell your father that your friends are his friends!’ and kissing her an affectionate adieu, she accompanied the grateful girl to the door.

‘Richard,’ she said, on her return to the parlor, ‘you have acted nobly, though I fear you are heaping coals of fire on Warden’s head.’

‘I cannot help it,’ he replied. ‘I do not desire to humiliate him, however.’

Agnes hastened home. Her father and mother were in the sitting room discussing some matter when she entered, but stopped abruptly on her appearance.

‘We were talking of the gloomy outlook,’ remarked Mrs. Warden. ‘What would you propose, Agnes?’

‘Father, as I understand it, wants a thousand pounds, doesn’t he?’

‘Yes.’

‘Well, I propose that he get it.’

‘But how, child?’

‘By asking it of those who would lend it,’ said Agnes.

‘Who will lend it?’ asked Mr. Warden.

‘Richard Gaston,’ replied Agnes. ‘I have asked him for it, on my own behalf, and he is ready to let you have it.’

‘When — on what security?’ asked Mr. Warden.

‘Now — to-night, if you want it, and he asks no security — not even an acknowledgment. He is willing to make it a debt of honor.’

‘Is it possible?’ said Warden, and hid his face in his hands.

Agnes thought it best to withdraw, and leave him with her mother.

When she met her parents at breakfast next morning she noted an air of subdued and reflective thought about her father — a something indicating the result of a struggle, which had allowed him little rest during the night. He looked at her kindly.

‘Agnes,’ he said, ‘I have thought it all over during the night. It was hard at first, but you have conquered. I will go, for your sake, and see Richard Gaston, and, more than that, I will tell him of my sorrow for the rejection of Dick’s suit, which I will recall. Is not that all I can do, and what I should do to atone for the past?’

‘Alas, father, so far as recalling the past is concerned I fear it will be of little avail. By this time Richard has started for Rome, where he is to be ordained. They had a letter from him to that effect last night.’

‘Let us hope it will not be too late to recall him,’ said Mrs. Warden. ‘Go, James — go at once, and carry out your purpose with Mr. Gaston.’

The clerks in Mr. Gaston’s store were surprised to see James Warden enter it on the morning in question. He

went directly to the private office, and when the door was closed behind him, much speculation as to the purpose of his visit was indulged in by them.

On entering the office Mr. Warden was met by Mr. Gaston, who rose from his seat and came to him with extended hands, and the friendly grasp of old-time friendship. He was embarrassed by this cordiality, and began what was intended for an apology, which Mr. Gaston cut short, after motioning him to be seated, by saying:

‘Friend Warden, let bygones be bygones. I cherish no hard feeling for what has passed. Let us both look to the present. Your daughter Agnes has told me of your embarrassment, and I assured her it would be a pleasure to me to afford you any assistance in my power. She told me that one thousand would help you out of the rut, and I said to her I would let you have it. I say the same to you now, and will add that if you need another thousand you can have it, also.’

James Warden’s face, during this colloquy, was a study. A sense of shame blended with humility shone on it, and even tears came to his eyes. It was a few moments before he could master his emotion sufficiently to express himself.

‘Richard,’ he said, ‘you are a splendid, magnanimous fellow, and—what I have not been—a good Christian. I accept your kind offer—a thousand is all I need—and ask forgiveness for the wrong which I have done to you and yours.’

‘It is freely granted, James,’ replied Mr. Gaston.

‘More than that, I withdraw all objection to your son being a suitor for Agnes’ hand. It was a wicked thing

in me to thwart them in their hopes. I have long deeply regretted it, but was too cursed obstinate to retract.'

'I fear,' said Mr. Gaston, 'that it may be too late to recall the boy. He has started for Rome, to be ordained.'

'Can't he be recalled? Can't you get Tom to intercept him in Boston?' eagerly asked Warden.

'It is barely possible. I will try. In fact I will start for Boston myself this afternoon, and see Tom; and if the boy has sailed, send Tom after him in the next steamer. Here is the money, Mr. Warden, and I hope it will aid you in tiding over your trouble. No note, no security — nothing, nothing, positively — it is a debt of honor.'

When Mr. Warden departed, Mr. Gaston summoned his head clerk, and told him of his sudden departure for Boston, to be gone perhaps for two or three weeks, and instructed him about the business during his absence. Then he went home and acquainted his wife with the position of affairs, and of his determination to recover his son, if possible, from the bosom of the church.

Mrs. Gaston was not prepared for the turn events had taken, and for a time she was bewildered. She did want her son to be a priest, but she knew it would be more to his taste to marry; and, as she loved Agnes like a daughter, she after a time became reconciled, and even heartily in favor of recalling Richard.

When the steamer left the wharf on that Thursday afternoon, to connect with other steamers and with land conveyances on the route to Boston, Richard Gaston the elder was among her passengers.

CHAPTER X.

LOST LOVE NOTES — THEODORE PARKER ON PROTESTANT-ISM — A FAMOUS MESMERIST.

‘So Richard is on his way to be sacrificed,’ said Tom, to his friend, Cluney, on the evening of the day of the steamer’s departure. ‘The more I think of it, the more I am dissatisfied with the whole business. It looks to me as if his life is to be wasted — for what?’

‘Do you know,’ remarked Cluney, ‘that Richard is in a measure responsible for the present condition of affairs. He was too impatient, too precipitate in action. What he should have done was to wait. Time would perhaps have changed the whole tenor of affairs, and given him his heart’s desire. Agnes would have waited for him; why not he for her?’

‘That is true,’ said Tom, ‘and the poor fellow still loves her to distraction. Here is something which proves it. I found it where he dropped it on the floor, and laid it on the table intending to take it with me and deliver it to him before parting at the steamship in East Boston, but forgot it. It is rhyme — poetry, possibly — and though I have only read the opening stanza, it strikes me as indicative of a peculiar case of brooding over the past when hope has been left behind. Shall I read it to you?’

‘It would perhaps be unfair to read such an effusion evidently intended only for his own eye, under ordinary circumstances; but if it will reveal the true state of his mind, it may be proper to read it,’ replied Cluney.

‘Here it is, then,’ said Tom. ‘It is addressed—

‘TO AGNES.

‘’Tis some time since, to thee, my heart’s delight,
I waked the slumbering muse to sing my sighs—

‘Sing his sighs is not bad,’ remarked Cluney, drily.

‘To tell how hopes, fantastically bright,
And beautiful as summer butterflies,
Had scorched their wings in the inflaming light
Of thy bright beaming beauty, which defies
Philosophy’s far-reaching medicine, the mind’s best
friend,
And like a fire consumes all thoughts that upward tend.’

‘Well,’ said Cluney, ‘that is not a bad stanza to set out with, but it shows, and no doubt truly, the state of the poor fellow’s heart. But, go on.’

‘But now, ere pale forgetfulness befriends
The wandering lover, and beguiles the sense;
While a dark future o’er his path impends,
And nought of labor past yields recompense;
’Tis now the thought of love, ill-given, contends
With thoughts opposed; and yet—oh vain pretense—
I seem to love not, while my heart is filled with fire,
The same that burns in every breast and never can
expire.

‘He must have a warm heart,’ interjected Cluney.

Tom read on :

‘And I have loved thee with a manly love—
A warm affection, glowing and sincere—
But, ah, ’twas hopeless, and I inly strove
To check its blind, its futile, mad career.
But passion will a conqueror oft prove—
As it has proved—stern, poignant, and severe.
Oh would that cup of bitterness were far removed,
And I had never tasted it—never had loved.

‘Poor fellow,’ said Cluney. ‘He takes it hard.’

‘He does,’ replied Tom, and read on:

‘Had loved! And hath not God himself ordained

That man should have a helpmate, to enjoy,
With him, all happiness in life contained?

And all should taste the bliss, without alloy,
Of loving and being loved. What else remained,

Without this boon, the affections to employ?
Nothing but low and sensual appetites,
The baser passions’ pals and parasites.’

‘Clearly he is not cut out for a priest,’ said Cluney. A man with such sentiments would not take kindly to bachelor existence.’

‘I knew that all along,’ said Tom. He resumed:

‘Yes; disappointment in my heart’s enshrined,

And hope has sunk below horizon’s verge.

Hope is the guiding star to every mind—

The polar point to which all joys converge;
Which, once lost sight of, or but ill-defined,

Can never from obscurity emerge.

No—for the mind, once disappointed, ne’er regains
Its former trust, and faith and love disdains.’

‘This shows a misanthropy which I think is foreign to Dick’s nature,’ remarked Cluney. ‘But he’ll get over it.’

‘I am not sure of that,’ said Tom. ‘It is a bad condition of mind to be in, I should say. There is but one more stanza. Here it is:’

‘Time hath worn wrinkles on unnumbered brows;

Hath borne great millions to a final doom;

But still affection will the heart arouse;

Love still, like flowers on a grave, will bloom.

No moment passes that hath not its vows,

And all the moments loving vows entomb.

Then why should I not live and love my day?

Soon death shall sweep my castled hopes away.’

‘Why,’ said Cluney, ‘that is good poetry—that stanza, in a poetic sense, is worth all the rest. Like the pearl oyster, Dick’s agony wrings jeweled tears from him. He has the poetic faculty, and if he cultivated it, might become a second Byron.’

‘I’d sooner have him a poet than a priest,’ said Tom; at which naïve remark Cluney laughed heartily, and Tom, catching the comicality of the idea, joined him.

‘Well,’ he said, ‘would it not be better to write sentiment in rhyme than to talk nonsense in prose, and dub it, “thus saith the Lord”? It would not be productive of so much harm, to my way of thinking.’

‘That may be, if your way of thinking were a correct one,’ said Cluney. ‘I suppose it is natural for man to love. No doubt when Adam and Eve first beheld one another, in the garden of Eden, it was a case of mutual love at first sight.’

‘I hope you do not include that nonsense in your faith,’ said Tom. ‘It is of a piece with most of the absurdity connected with the genesis of man and things in the Bible.’

‘For want of a better, it has served a purpose to the present time—creation, the fall of man, and concomitant circumstances. Do you know of any better?’ asked Cluney, with a slight accent of sarcasm in his voice.

‘I have a higher conception of man’s origin than that. That is to say, a better one. Now, just for a moment consider the inconsistency of this Jewish or Egyptian fable, so far as it relates to man: God, an absolutely wise and almighty creator, made man in his own likeness. (The truth is, however, that man made God in his own likeness.) Then—for, according to the account, his

work was of an experimental nature, — he saw that it was not good for man to be alone, and he put him into a deep sleep; took a rib from his side and made it into a woman! What utter nonsense!’

‘Do you think such a feat is impossible to the Creator?’ asked Cluney.

‘Of course I do,’ replied Tom. ‘That is, I believe it impossible to have been done in a way contrary to the ordinary laws of production and reproduction. Adam was never created as is asserted in the fable. He came in the ordinary way. That is, man came in a form or as a result of slow development from lower conditions of existence. But this is not my point here.

‘What I want to point out to you is the manifest absurdity of this very claim of miraculous creation, and the history of this precious pair from whom we are said to be descended. Now, according to the account, God created the first man and woman perfect, that is, without sin. Now, what did this perfect pair do, to begin with? They disobeyed God — became thieves and prevaricators!

‘Evidently, the job was a bad one from the beginning. Well, to mend his bungling work, this all-wise God turned this precious pair out of Eden, cursed the ground for Adam’s sake, or, rather his own (God’s) mistake in man-making, and condemned Adam to eat his bread in the sweat of his face. This was the curse — a curious one, indeed! It might rather be called a blessing, for in the necessity to work resides the germ of all true progress among men.

‘Well, after they left the Garden of Eden, this couple had two sons, in whom were intensified the depravity of their parents. One of them added the crime of murder

to the original sin of Adam and Eve, which consisted in disobeying the command of God by eating an apple! This fruit, we are told, grew on a tree in the midst of the garden. Was it placed there to afford an opportunity to tempt that badly-constructed pair? Then, to surely compass their destruction, God endowed a serpent with the power of persuasive speech, and allowed him to tell Eve that if she and Adam ate of the fruit they would be as gods, would know good and evil, and would not die!

‘Just imagine what a treasure a talking serpent would be to Barnum in his New York museum. I would like to hear a serpent speak—articulate with his peculiar mouth and forked tongue. But no doubt in the age of fable everything talked, even asses. Baalam’s’—

‘For that matter asses may talk today,’ drily remarked Cluney. Tom continued—after acknowledging the hit, which in no way disconcerted him—

‘Then the ages rolled onward. The earth was peopled. It became more and more wicked in every way, until God decided to blot out his failure by drowning the whole brood of men and animals. But he relented so far as to save one little family colony of all of them.

‘Then more ages passed, and men again multiplied on the earth and became very wicked. And then this experimental God sent his only son among this wicked race to be killed as an atonement—for what? For his own bungling work! Pshaw! If I couldn’t invent a better God than Moses gave the world, I would—well, I’d go to work at writing poor poetry!’

Cluney laughed heartily at Tom’s conclusion. ‘Tom,’ he said, ‘you are an iconoclast of “purest ray serene.”’

‘Am I?’ responded Tom. ‘Then I am not ashamed of

my work in pulling down such a badly-constructed temple of superstition as that is. No, no. Nature is more logical in its operations. It makes no such blunders as this one. The true creative principle of the universe makes no such mistakes as creating perfect beings and then finding them imperfect—lacking in some of the most essential qualities needed by them. The fact is that, in the active processes of the universe, conditions are progressive, and therefore changing all the time.'

'How do you know this, Tom?'

'By the inductive process. You taught me in your school that analogy was the basis of inductive reasoning, and by that method I obtain my conclusions. I feel they are sound and logical.'

'Well, examined in the light of reason, the things related in Genesis can not be accepted on any hypothesis. The best we can do is to accept them figuratively.'

'Do you accept them in that way?' asked Tom.

'No, I do not,' was the reply, and the subject was dropped.

The friends continued to enjoy themselves by short excursions into the country, down to Chelsea beach, and elsewhere. Nahant and Hull were visited, Bunker Hill Monument and the State House cupola climbed up into, and fine views of Boston and its surroundings enjoyed; and in these and other ways the time for the remainder of the week was passed.

On Sunday, the forenoon preaching by Theodore Parker was attended. His theme was Protestantism, in which he discussed the merits of the Protestant party in the religion of the world.

"The merit of Protestantism," he said, "was both negative and positive. It was right in declaring the Roman church with its clergy, cardinals, councils, popes, no more inspired than other men, and therefore no more fit than others to keep Tradition, expound Scripture, and hold the key of Heaven. It was right in denying the authority of the church in temporal matters; in declaring that its tradition was no better than any other tradition, nay, was even less valuable, for the church had told lies in the premises, and the fact was undeniable.

"The capital vice of Protestantism was to limit the power of private inspiration, and, since there must be somewhere a standard external or within us, to make the Bible master the soul. Theoretically, it narrowed the sources of our religious truth, and instead of three, as the Catholics, it gave us but one; though, practically, it did more than the Catholics, for it brought men directly to one fountain of truth. But the sacramental error of Protestantism in restricting private judgment of the doctrines of the Bible was in part neutralized by admitting freedom of individual conscience, and therefore the right and the duty to interpret the Bible.

"If Protestantism have great merits, it has great faults, which come from its peculiar doctrine, while its merits have a deeper source. It makes God dark and awful; a judge, not a protector; jealous, selfish and vindictive. All the lovely traits of divine character it bestows upon the Son; he is mild and beautiful as God is awful and morose. Men rush from the Father; they flee to the Son. Its religion is fear of God, not love of him, for man cannot love what is not lovely.

"This system degrades man. He is born totally

depraved, and laden, besides, with the sins of Adam. He can do nothing to recover from these sins; the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of the sinner's justification; this righteousness is received through 'faith,' which is 'the gift of God,' and so 'salvation is wholly of grace.' The salvation of man is wrought for him, not by him. It logically annihilates the difference between good and evil, denying the ultimate value of a manly life.

"It does not tell of God now, near at hand, but a long while ago. It makes the Bible a tyrant of the soul. It is our master in all departments of thought. Science must lay its kingly head in the dust; reason veil her majestic countenance; conscience bow him to the earth; affection keep silence when the priest uplifts the Bible. It takes the Bible for God's statute-book; combines old Hebrew notions into a code of ethics; takes figures for fact; settles questions in morals and religion by texts of Scripture! It can justify anything out of the Bible. It wars to the knife against gaiety of heart; condemns amusement as sinful; sneers at common sense; spits upon reason, calling it 'carnal;' appeals to low and selfish aims—to fear, the most selfish and base of all passions.

"It makes religion unnatural to men, and of course hostile; Christianity alien to the soul. It paves hell with children's bones; has a personal Devil in the world, to harry the land, and lure or compel men to eternal woe. Its God is diabolical. It puts an intercessor between God and man; relies on the advocate. Cannot the Infinite love his frail children without teasing? Can men approach the Everywhere-present only by attorney, as a beggar comes to a Turkish king? Away with

such folly! Jesus of Nazareth bears his own sins, not another's. How can his righteousness be 'imputed' to me? Goodness out of me is not mine; helps me no more than another's food feeds or his sleep refreshes me. Adam's sin, — it was Adam's affair, not mine.

"This system applies to God the language of kings' courts, trial, sentence, judgment, pardon, satisfaction, allegiance, day of judgment. Like a courtier, it lays stress on forms — baptism, which in itself is nothing but a dispensation of water; the Lord's supper, which of itself is nothing but a dispensation of wine and bread. It makes men stiff, unbending, cold, formal, austere, seldom lovely. They have the strength of the law, not of the gospel; the cunning of the Pharisee, not the simplicity of the Christian.

"You know its followers soon as you see them; the rose is faded out of their cheeks; their mouth drooping and sad; their appearance says, Alas, my fellow-worm! It is a faith of stern, morose men, well befitting the decendants of Odin, and his iron peers; its religion is a principle, not a sentiment; a foreign matter imported into the soul, by forethought and resolution; not a native fountain of joy and gladness, leaping up in winter's frost, and summer's gladness, playing with the sober autumn, or the sunshine of spring.

"The Heaven of this system is a grand pay-day, where Humility is to have its coach and six, forsooth, because she has been humble; the saints and martyrs, who bore trials in the world, are to take their vengeance by shouting 'Hallelujah, glory to God!' when they see the anguish of their old persecutors, and the 'smoke of their torment ascending up forever and ever.'

“Do the joys of paradise pall on the pleasure-jaded senses of the ‘elect?’ They look off in the distance to the tortures of the damned, where destruction is naked before them, and hell hath no covering; where the devil with his angels stirreth up the embers of the fire which is never quenched; where the doubters, whom the church could neither answer nor put to silence; where the great men of antiquity, Confucius, Budha, Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle; where the men, great, and gifted, and glorious, who mocked at difficulty, softened the mountains of despair, and hewed a path amid the trackless waste, that mortal feet might tread the way of peace; where the great men of modern times, who would not insult the Deity by bowing to the foolish word of a hireling priest—where all these writhe in their tortures, turn and turn and find no ray, but yell in fathomless despair; and when the elect behold all this they say, striking on their harps of gold, ‘Aha! We are comforted and thou art tormented, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, and our garments are washed white in the blood of the Lamb!’”

The applause on this occasion, though not so strong as on the previous Sunday, was still hearty enough. It was not so striking to Cluney as on the former occasion, but was enough so to cause him to again remark the strangeness of it.

‘I can hardly reconcile it,’ he said, ‘with my idea of divine worship. I could imagine that, at the Day of Judgment, when the Lord would sentence some particularly obnoxious tyrant to perdition, this kind of people would burst out into applause.’

‘But this was not a divine worship, in your sense of

the term, but a meeting of human beings, to be guided and instructed in rational views of things which concern the world of ordinary humanity; and I can see nothing improper in thus giving evidence of approval of the views expressed.'

'Perhaps not; it is of course a good deal as to how one views it,' replied Cluney.

'Yes, and as to what one is accustomed to,' said Tom.

After dinner the conversation turned on where the friends would go in the evening. 'For,' said Tom to Cluney, 'as it is your last Sunday with me, [the school-master was going to Saratoga the latter part of the week, and from there to Montreal, and thence direct home by water] I want to treat you to some novelty. Let me see: How would a Spiritualist meeting suit you?'

'Just the thing,' was the reply. 'I would like to be present at one of these meetings.'

'Well,' said Tom, 'there is a regular Sunday night meeting of these people in a small hall on Washington street, where tomorrow evening I intend to have you go and see Prof. Leroy, the great mesmerist.'

During the afternoon, however, the friends took a stroll on the Common, and then down to the harbor front on the wharves. On Long wharf were a number of Indiamen — fine ships for the time.

'The Yankees are fast becoming a sea-faring nation,' remarked Cluney.

'They are that already,' replied Tom, 'and will soon lay over England in that respect.'

'I doubt it, Tom. England — that is, Great Britain — depends on her merchant marine for her supremacy as a

nation of manufacturers and shopkeepers, as well as on her navy for practical naval domination on the ocean. Her maritime supremacy is, in fact, absolutely necessary to her continuance as a first class power; and she will not lightly surrender it to any other nation. Besides, this country, with a vast interior full of natural resources, will find in other lines of production more profit than in mere sea-faring.'

'Perhaps you are right; this is a magnificent country, of grand resources, and destined to be the greatest nation in the world.'

'I doubt it not,' rejoined Cluney.

In the evening the friends, with others, repaired to the hall on Washington street, but, for some reason that could not be learned, there was no meeting that night.

One of the men in the crowd of disappointed ones attracted Cluney's attention. He pointed the man out to Tom Gaston, who immediately recognized him.

'That is Prof. Leroy, the mesmerist,' he said.

'He might also be the devil,' remarked Cluney. 'He looks uncanny enough to be a spirit of some kind, though certainly not an angel.'

Prof. Leroy was certainly a very strange-looking man. He was dark and swarthy enough to be an East Indian. He might be taken to have negro blood in him, if he had not such a great growth of coarse black hair on his head. His eyes were very black, and, in harmony with his face, gave him rather a singular and unearthly appearance.

'I have made his acquaintance,' said Tom; 'and, now that we are disappointed in our Spiritualist meeting, suppose I introduce you, take him home with us, and see what he can do. He, at least, is an intelligent man, and

is very frank in conversation, and an interesting talker.'

'Agreed,' said Cluney.

The introduction took place, and Tom asked the professor if he would accompany them. He readily consented, and the trio were soon seated in Tom's rooms at the West End.

Tom had noted that from the time Cluney first saw Leroy he appeared like one fascinated by him, and, thinking that perhaps he might prove a good subject, the wicked thought came to him to suggest to the professor to give an exhibition of his art then and there, Cluney to be the victim. He knew the professor would oblige him, for he had written some flattering notices of his exhibitions in the Times.

Accordingly, after some general conversation, in which he took especial pains to dilate on the wonderful power of the mesmerist, Tom asked him if he would not give an exhibition of his power among themselves, and offered himself as a subject.

'There is a subject present,' said Leroy, 'but you are not the one. I would not, however, think of operating on Mr. Cluney, without first obtaining his consent.'

'I doubt if you could mesmerize him,' said Tom, winking at the professor. 'Do you think he could?' he asked addressing Cluney.

'I do not know,' replied Cluney, in an indifferent way; 'but he can try.'

'I need not do that,' said Leroy. 'You are already under my control.'

Tom saw that indeed Cluney was already mesmerized. 'Now,' thought he, 'I will have some rare fun with him.' But he was cautious about speaking out his wishes, so he

wrote on a slip of paper, which he handed to the professor:

‘Ask him if he doesn’t know his uncle, Father Tom — meaning me? Then lead him on to talk the strongest kind of Infidelity to me; and make him talk it in the rich Cork brogue. (He’s a native of Cork.)’

Taking his cue, the professor addressed Cluney with:

‘Well, sir; why don’t you speak to your uncle, here — Father Tom?’

Cluney looked at Tom fixedly, for a moment, and then approached him, and said:

‘Well, uncle Tom, what the devil brings you here?’

‘Put a little Cork brogue in your talk,’ suggested Leroy, ‘when you are speaking with his reverence.’

‘Well, ye ould spalpeen, what the divvel brings ye here? D’ye think I’m an omadhawn, that can’t take care of meself?’

‘No,’ replied Tom, who could hardly refrain from laughing outright; ‘but I’m afraid ye’ll lose yer sowl in Boston, along wid that blaggard, Tom Gaston.’

‘Tell him what an out-and-out Infidel you are,’ suggested Leroy; ‘and you needn’t use the brogue in doing it.’

Cluney straightened himself up, and assuming a tone and dignity habitual to him in addressing a class at school, said:

‘Father Tom, I would remind you that my soul — if I have such a thing — is my own, and I am in no danger of losing it. Soul-saving is not a matter of business with me, as it is with you. My profession, sir, deals in the cultivation of the mind, and not the credulity of the young — and for that matter the old, as with you.’

‘What,’ said Tom, interrupting him, ‘do you mean to say that my holy profession is one of humbugging people, old and young?’

‘That is just what I mean to say. How can it be otherwise, when the church you represent is based on humbug. The Bible miracles are all fables; the story of the incarnation is only a repetition of a very old fable, antedating Christianity by thousands of years; indeed Christ is only a myth, and his life and deeds a tissue of inventions by the so-called fathers of the church, and you know it, as well as I do, Father Tom!’

‘Do you not believe in the immortality of the soul?’ asked Tom, who was nearly choked in the endeavor to stifle his laughter.

‘Immortality of the soul? No! You may as well ask me if I believe in the reality of dreams? And yet there is more reality in them than in that. What folly! No one can tell anything about it, and no one in existence can ever know. Immortality is a creature of our selfish desires — nothing more!’

‘Then you’re an Infidel,’ said Tom.

‘I am,’ said Cluney; ‘and I glory in the fact!’

‘What would you say if the church should pronounce the curse of excommunication against you?’ asked Tom.

‘I should laugh at it! I defy the Catholic church, and all its devils in the guise of saints! I fear them not, and glory in being a man!’

Tom could contain himself no longer, and burst into a shout of uncontrollable laughter, and Leroy, judging that this line of exhibition had gone far enough, proceeded to restore Cluney to his normal condition.

When he came to his normal condition, Cluney found

himself standing in the middle of the room, and Tom Gaston rolling at his feet on the carpet, in a fit of laughter.

‘What’s the matter, Tom,’ he asked. ‘Are you sick? What has happened?’

Tom, after a while, gathered himself up, and — with a face reddened by extreme laughter — tried to explain.

‘What,’ said Cluney, ‘do you mean to say that I have been mesmerized?’

‘That is what you have been,’ said Tom, who renewed his laughter.

‘And what have I been doing or saying that was so funny?’ asked Cluney. ‘I remember nothing.’

Tom — who had taken notes of what he had said — described the seance to him, and how he had been addressing him (Tom) in the belief that he was his uncle, the priest, who had come to Boston after him. But when Tom read what Cluney said about the church, Bible, Infidelity and immortality of the soul, the school-master interrupted him, with —

‘Impossible, Tom—it is impossible that I should have used such language.’ And he appealed to the professor, who confirmed Tom’s report.

‘Well,’ said Cluney, with a twinkle of humor in his eye, ‘the only way I can account for it is my connection with you for the past ten days, Tom. You know the saying: “Evil communications corrupt,” and so forth.’

Tom, however, soon restored his good humor, and to give him some amusement in turn for what he had furnished, asked a few of the boarders into the room to see the professor, who soon found among them two subjects whom he mesmerized, and made to perform some curious and comical feats, such as to mistake one another for

persons of the opposite sex and fall to love making, and then to have a domestic wrangling scene.

These exhibitions were greatly enjoyed by Cluney, as well as by others present, and when, to wind up, the professor made both subjects deliver orations together, on different subjects, the effect was truly comical, and was a fitting wind-up to the evening's entertainment.

After the professor had departed, Cluney said:

‘If I were at all inclined to superstition, I should say that if that man Leroy was not the veritable personal devil, he was at least a demon clothed in man's form.’

‘That he is not,’ said Tom, ‘but he is simply a sensible, honest man, who uses that singular faculty of his to make a living. He was at one time a famous Methodist revivalist preacher; but becoming convinced of the falsity of Christianity—that is, the theological part of it—left the ministry and a good living to be independent. He is a remarkable man.’

‘I should say he was,’ rejoined Cluney.

CHAPTER XI.

GASTON SENIOR COMES TO BOSTON—TOM GASTON GOES
TO EUROPE—ON BOARD THE BALTIC.

The Monday following the events narrated in the last chapter passed without any incident to Tom and Cluney worth noting. On Tuesday it was arranged that they take a steamboat trip to Nahant, where they were to have a regular New England clam-bake—one of the

very few gastronomic customs of the Indians which have survived them.

Arrived at Nahant, after a pleasant sail, Cluney expressed a desire to see how clams were baked, a la Indian, and Tom took him to the spot where a fire had already been lighted over a number of stones, set in a bowl-like hollow in the ground. When the fire had nearly burnt out, the embers and ashes were carefully swept away, and several baskets of washed clams were poured in on the hot stones, to which a number of ears of corn in the husk were added. The whole was then quickly covered with a thick layer of green seaweed, and the pile left to steam and cook.

‘I have read of clambakes,’ said Cluney, ‘but such descriptions were hardly realistic enough to satisfy me—I wanted to see the operation with my own eyes, and now I am satisfied.’

In a short time the clams were cooked and served, and Cluney declared that he had never enjoyed any meal like it before in his life.

‘There is a sweetness about the clam cooked in that way, that I never realized before,’ he said. ‘The only drawback to perfect enjoyment is the presence of sand, which grits on the teeth.’

‘It illustrates anew,’ remarked Tom, ‘the truth that there is no bliss without its sand—alloy, I should say.’

It was late in the evening when the friends returned to the city. Tom stopped at the office to do some work, and Cluney proceeded up to the boarding house. As he entered the door, the landlady asked:

‘Where is Mr. Gaston?’

He told her.

‘A gentleman—his father, I am sure, for Mr. Gaston is the picture of him—has been here twice, and waited over an hour the last time. He inquired for Mr. Gaston, and seemed in a great hurry to see him. He also asked if you were here.’

‘Good God!’ exclaimed Cluney. ‘I hope nothing serious has happened at home.’

‘I hope not,’ said the landlady, ‘though he seemed much troubled, and nervous-like. He said he would call again. Why, I declare—here he comes up the street, this blessed moment.’

The elder Gaston, for such he was, came up quickly, and, seeing Cluney, his face lightened.

‘Where’s Tom,’ he asked. ‘I have been looking for him the whole afternoon.’

Cluney explained, and also told him where they had been that day, and of their late return to the city. Then the father asked:

‘Has Richard been with you?’

‘Yes; and he left about a week ago, for Rome.’

They had by this time reached Tom’s room, which was fortunate, for the father sank limp into a chair, the picture of disappointment, saying:

‘As I feared—too late!’

‘What is it, Mr. Gaston? Tell me. Has anything happened? Has—’

But at this juncture the door of the room opened, and Tom entered. Recognizing his father at a glance, a gleam of joy lighted his face, but, noticing his apparent distress, it quickly changed to an expression of concern. The father, seeing his son, rose, and both were locked in each other’s arms.

‘Father,’ said Tom, ‘what has happened? Has — mother —’

‘Your mother is well,’ was the reply, ‘but, O, Tom, I had hoped to find your brother here and take him home with me. But, it is too late! — too late!’

Then he explained what had happened as already narrated. When he had finished, Tom said, quickly:

‘Cheer up, father! It may not be too late. In fact, I feel a conviction that it is not. I will follow him in the next steamer from New York, which I believe sails on Saturday next. From what Dick said, I think he will linger on the way, and in that case I can get to Rome ahead of him.’

‘I pray to God you may,’ said Mr. Gaston, ‘for it would be a life-disappointment to me to have him become a priest under the circumstances.’

‘There is little use in regretting what cannot now be helped, father. The best thing to do now is to concert measures for the future. If I remember rightly, the steamer Baltic, of the Collins line, sails on Saturday next from New York to Liverpool, and I can go in her. This will give me two days here to settle my affairs, which I can do in that time.’

‘What affairs, Tom?’ asked the father.

Then Tom explained to him about his connection with the daily Times, and what he had been doing in the way of journalism.

‘So,’ he said, ‘that accounts for your independence in money matters. Well, Tom, I am rather pleased to find you forging ahead for yourself in this manner, though, as you know, I would have honored any request of yours for money, at any time.’

‘I know that, father, and also that you could afford to let me have it. But I wanted to be the young bird who could fly of its own unaided strength, rather than depend on the old one for sustenance, especially as I will have to do it sooner or later, in any event.’

‘It is a good spirit, and I like it in you, Tom. But do you know that we have had the impression at home that you were a sad, free-thinking radical.’

‘Well, father, suppose I am? I am honest about it. I am perhaps imprudent in being outspoken in my views. But,’ and Tom looked roguishly at Cluney, ‘when you come to dissect what I say, it is no worse than Master Cluney has given expression to in my presence.’

Cluney colored up, and was about to speak, when Tom turned off the point of his remark, by adding —

‘But, then, he was only quoting one of the unbelievers as a warning to me—that is, to give me an idea how such things would strike me if put into language; and I must allow, they did strike me as rather peculiar—at least coming from him.’

‘Well, Tom, the offence is not a serious one with me. I was inclined to free thinking at one time myself.’

‘I judge you were, father, though I never mentioned it before; for among the books I now have are two of yours which I picked up in an old chest in the garret. One is Paine’s “Age of Reason,” and the other is Voltaire’s “History of the Manners and Spirit of Nations.” I know they were yours at one time, for your name is written in each book.’

‘That is not my writing, Tom. It is your grandfather’s. His name was Richard, also.’

‘I might have thought of that,’ rejoined Tom. ‘Well,

it shows that I come honestly by my free-thinking propensities, at least.'

'I suppose it runs in the blood,' said Mr. Gaston, 'for my father was a free-thinker and an active participant—he was young then—in the scenes of the French Revolution of 1789. His leaving France, when Bonaparte became First Consul, is the subject of a story in itself, and I will tell it to you some time or other—when you come home.'

'I would like to hear it,' said Tom. 'But now to the business in hand. One of the first things I shall do in the morning will be to see Dr. Bigelow of the Medical School, and tell him why I must be absent. I know he will fix everything smooth for me.'

'That is right, Tom. Do not miss taking your professional degree,' said the father.

'Then,' continued Tom, 'I will arrange with Mr. Roberts to get some one in my place; and will console him for my loss by promising to write a series of letters to the paper from different points of interest in Europe. Such letters of foreign travel are now in great favor here.'

'I shall go on to New York with you, Tom,' said the elder Gaston. 'I have some business to transact there, and can do it after seeing you off.'

'And, as I am going to Saratoga,' said Cluney, 'I will go along with you as far as New York, also.'

'Do you know what I propose to do?' said Tom.

'What is it?'

'It is to get a French grammar, and French-English dictionary, and study the language on my way across to Europe.'

‘The idea is not a bad one,’ replied the father, ‘but reading and speaking French are two different things. I could speak it when young, and can yet, but my tongue has grown out of it, so to speak. I have lost the pure accent. However, while I am with you, I can give you some hints in regard to pronunciation.’

‘I can read French easily,’ remarked Cluney, ‘and even old French, for I have read Rebelais in that language. But as to speaking French, I would despair to attempt it with the hope of making myself understood by a Frenchman.’

‘Nevertheless,’ replied Tom, ‘I will make the attempt. I can only fail. But,’ he added, confidently, ‘I’ll be hanged if I do!’

The two following days were spent by Tom in arranging his affairs in Boston to his satisfaction. When Dr. Bigelow understood the nature of his sudden call to go to Europe, he entered heartily into the business of making everything smooth for the young man.

‘You are one of the ablest men in the class,’ he said, ‘and the profession must not lose you. I will give you a letter to Dr. Blank, of London,—of whom you have read—and I know he will treat you well. I sincerely hope you will succeed in rescuing your brother from a church life. It is, so far as human ties go, a kind of living death.’

With George Roberts, of the Times, Tom made a satisfactory arrangement. ‘I am very sorry to lose you,’ he said, ‘but, of course, you can do nothing less than follow your brother, and prevent his becoming a priest. I know, however, that we will have a compensation in the letters you’ll write. Make them as practical

as possible, and abounding with just the information which you would like to find in letters from abroad. I will give you one or two letters of introduction to gentlemen of my acquaintance in London and Paris, and also, a certificate that you are the special European correspondent of the Times. Such a document will no doubt aid you under certain conditions. At any rate, it will not injure you if found on your person.'

Cluney, on his part, was not idle. He went to Bishop Fitzpatrick, and told him of the peculiar matters connected with young Gaston's choice of a priest's life. When the bishop heard the story, he said:

'Mr. Cluney, if I had known these facts when the young man was here, I would have strongly advised him against taking holy orders. Such men as he are not fit for the priesthood. However, I will give you, for his brother, a letter to the head of the Propaganda in Rome, and would advise that young man to make all haste in its delivery.'

On Friday morning, all things being arranged, the elder Gaston, Cluney, and Tom left Boston en route for New York.

There had been a good rain during the preceding night but it had cleared off, and a bracing west wind — a precursor of the September ones — had set in. Riding in a railway carriage was then a luxury, though, of course, the coaches were nothing like what they are today. Chair cars, parlor cars, and sleepers, were then unthought of, and people who traveled by night had to get along as best they could, taking 'cat-naps' from time to time. Hence, most people preferred traveling by daylight.

The elder Gaston and Cluney had ridden on English

railways, but both agreed that the American coach was more convenient, and certainly more democratic.

The party, after a most enjoyable ride, arrived in New York in the evening, and proceeded at once to the Astor House, on lower Broadway. This was, at the time, the leading commercial hotel of the city.

It was quickly ascertained that the great steamer *Baltic*, which had already made the fastest time between lands—some ten days—that had yet been achieved by ocean steamship, would sail at noon on the following day, Saturday.

Passage and stateroom were at once secured, and Tom learned some facts in regard to the necessity of having passports while traveling in Europe—he did not need them in England—so he obtained an American passport.

On Saturday, when the banks were open, Mr. Gaston obtained an amount of sterling exchange which he thought his son might need for expenses in Europe; and then, to make sure he would not lack for means, gave him also a letter of credit to a well known banking firm in London.

In his hasty preparations for the voyage, Tom thought it best not to load himself down with luggage; so he took only a small leather trunk, with one change of clothing, a light overcoat, and some white shirts.

An hour before noon, the party, with Tom's modest trunk, left the hotel in a carriage, and were soon at the pier, where the *Baltic* was lying. After seeing that his trunk was carried to his stateroom, and taking possession of the latter, the time remaining before the steamer cast loose from the pier was occupied by Mr. Gaston in giving instructions to his son with regard to his mission.

‘Here is a letter for Richard,’ he said, ‘which I hope you can deliver to him. But, if it is too late to intercept him, and he has already been ordained, do not give it to him. If that thing has unfortunately taken place, it is, of course, best that he should know nothing about the matter. We must make the best of it.’

‘I don’t want to think of such a possibility as my being too late to intercept him; but, if I am, then, of course, he must not know what has happened; and it will puzzle me to explain to him why I have followed him to Rome. But I guess I can frame a plausible excuse. One thing should be understood, and that is, if he has become a priest, it is best he should never know how near he has been to happiness, and missed it. Home gossip, if there be any, should be silenced.’

‘I will look out for that, Tom. Be sure and write when you arrive in Liverpool; then, when you get to London; and finally, when you reach Rome. It is right that we should know the worst, if such it be — But, in the meantime, we will hope for the best.’

‘That is right, father. There is no philosophy in anticipating trouble.’

The bell of the steamship, warning those who were seeing their friends off, now began to ring.

Embracing his father, and bidding his friend Cluney good-bye, Thomas Gaston accompanied them to the gangway, and watched them standing on the pier, waving him adieu, until the ship was well down the bay.

Then he turned and enjoyed the views on the Jersey shore — not very picturesque, on account of the flat lands; on Staten and Long Islands, and then up the North River, which was crowded with craft of all kind, from the

swift-moving steam tugs to the slow-going canal boats and lighters. Behind was an animated scene, as he saw it in vista through the Narrows. Before, the vast ocean upon which he was about to enter, and on whose unstable bosom he was to be tossed about for the next ten or twelve days. The thought was not a cheering one, but, as he was on a mission of brotherly love, the hope that it would be successful, buoyed him; besides he was not one to mope and brood over things which could not be amended by such actions.

After entering upon the ocean, and viewing for a short time the opening lines of coast on the Jersey and Long Island shores, young Gaston began to take some interest in his immediate surroundings—to look over the ship he was in, in fact.

The Baltic was then one of the largest transatlantic steamers, being 3200 tons burden, and would not be small compared with some of the steamers of the present day. She was nearly 300 feet in length, and nearly 50 feet in width, with a depth of hold of over 30 feet. She was a side-wheel steamer, the diameter of her huge wheels being 36 feet, and the length of their floats over 12 feet. Her engines were very powerful, and she appeared to make rapid headway in the water. This huge vessel—the largest young Gaston had ever seen—interested him greatly, and he soon, by inquiry, learned all about her internal arrangements, especially her huge propelling machinery, the operation of which he watched for some time with great interest.

When dinner was announced, young Gaston repaired, with others, to the spacious dining saloon, which, however, was not well filled, as the passenger list of the

steamer was not a full one, travel to Europe being light.

At the table he was given a seat next to a gentleman of rather large physique, a fine and even noble countenance, who in the course of the meal opened a pleasant conversation, in fluent English, with, young Gaston thought, a slight foreign accent, but whether he was French or German, he could not decide. The gentleman was polite and courteous enough to be a Frenchman, but he looked more like a German, with his broad face, high forehead, gray eyes, and heavy moustache. His age might be about fifty. He was as straight as an arrow, and any one who had seen the soldiers of Europe would have placed him at once in the military profession. But the young man was inexperienced in this respect, and was puzzled where to place him. After a few polite commonplaces, he asked:

‘Is this your first visit to Europe?’

‘It is, sir; and as it is taken unexpectedly, it finds me at the disadvantage of going unprepared so far as any knowledge of the French language is concerned, which will be inconvenient, as I shall have to travel on the Continent.’

‘That is a drawback; but not without remedy. You will find couriers—persons who can speak all the European languages fluently—whose services can be obtained for a consideration.’

‘I presume so,’ said Gaston, ‘but, do you know; I have cherished the idea—wild it is, no doubt—of gathering enough of the French language, during the voyage, to get along without such aid.’

The gentleman smiled, and said: ‘If you could acquire such a knowledge of French as you aim at in

two weeks, you would certainly be a phenomenal man.'

'I am quick to learn,' said Tom, 'but I am aware that I shall have a great difficulty in the matter of pronunciation. My father, on the way from Boston to New York, sought to give me an idea of the pronunciation of several of the colloquial words used by inquirers, and I caught the accent quite well, he thought, though he had himself been long out of practice in the habitual use of the language.'

'Is your father French?' inquired the gentleman.

'I may say he is, though he was born in England, and his mother was of that country. His father was a Frenchman, but left France after Napoleon became First Consul. I never heard the story in regard to it.'

'What was your grandfather's name, if I may be excused for asking it?'

'Richard Gaston.'

'The name is Norman French, certainly,' remarked the gentleman. Then he said: 'You have chosen a fortunate period for your visit, for Europe is now in a state of profound tranquility, though how long this will last is uncertain, for the elements of future contention are not lacking in plenty.'

'I am glad of it,' returned the young man, 'for I desire to reach my destination as quickly as possible, though afterwards I may take occasion to visit many famous places on the Continent other than the one I am going to, namely, Rome.'

'Well,' remarked the gentleman, 'if your tour is extended in certain directions on the Continent, you will meet evidences of the ravages of civil war. You will see cities scarred and mutilated by shot and shell;

exploded fortresses in ruins; private dwellings and palaces burned, and entire streets, in some of the cities, with nothing remaining but smoked and tottering walls. You will see some of the evidences of military and siege operations at Rome and its vicinity. You will find everything quiet, but it is the repressive calm of military rule; for the bayonet and the musket, the sabre and the cannon, in the hands of legions of soldiers, hold the people in check—for how long, no one can predict.'

'Europe,' said Tom, 'is a wonderful country in science and art, and I have often longed to visit it, without the hope of having an early opportunity of doing so. And even now I can scarcely realize that I am going there.'

'In Europe,' remarked the gentleman, 'you will find a country far different from America. There art—including that of war—is everything, and man is as nothing.'

At the close of the meal, young Gaston sought the upper deck. The evening was bright and calm, the ocean smooth, with only the regular heaving swell, which is never absent from it. Thomas Gaston stood leaning against the rail of the ship, and taking in the scene, when a voice at his side remarked:

'This is one of the rare occurrences at sea, and one not to be forgotten.'

Tom turned, and the friendly stranger of the dinner table stood beside him. 'Pardon me,' said the gentleman, 'for omitting to give you my name at the table, in return for yours. At present, I choose to be known as Warfield, and by that name you can address me. I say this because we are fellow-passengers, and I have taken a fancy to you; and—pardon me, if I am intrusive—have determined to aid you in your study of the French

language, which, fortunately, I can speak with some fluency.'

'I thank you for your interest in me,' replied the young man, 'and will accept your offer gladly.'

'Well,' said Warfield, 'as this is so fine an evening, and we may not have another like it during the voyage, suppose we do nothing about the lessons, but talk of anything else you please. What subjects are you most interested in?'

'Religion, free thought, and the physical sciences.'

Then Tom gave the stranger a frank account of himself, of his medical studies, of his doubts regarding revealed religion, and other things pertaining to his peculiar views, with which the reader is already acquainted. The stranger heard him with a sympathetic interest, and, when he had finished, remarked:

'My dear sir, you have, without perhaps being aware of it, caught the spirit of free thought and free inquiry, which is becoming more and more widespread as the years roll on. It is the spirit which is destined, in the fullness of time, to emancipate the human race from the thralldom of superstition, of ecclesiastical authority—of perhaps all authority, as now constituted. But its work will be realized slowly, very slowly. The masses are not prepared for it. They still cling to their idols. When you are a gray-haired man, if you live as long, you will perhaps almost fail to see any perceptible progress in the direction you are tending. But there will be progress, nevertheless. One powerful element in the change, which is inevitable, will be the development of the exact sciences. There is a natural order for all changes in the physical world, and in the mental or intellectual as well.'

‘You think, then, that it is only a question of time when these changes will be brought about?’ queried Tom.

‘Undoubtedly,’ replied Warfield. ‘It is in the line of evolution, and thus in harmony with the great and immutable law of change, which pervades the universe.’

‘Do advanced scientists believe in a special creation, like that related in the Hebrew book of Genesis?’ asked Tom.

‘Not at all. That is simply the accounting of ignorance for the result of phenomena which it had no right conception of.’

‘Has not man come up from lower conditions of life?’ asked Tom.

‘I do not doubt it. The simple cell is the unit of all organic structure, and is substantially the same in the embryo of the plant as in that of the animal. The wonderful development of organic structure that we now see is no doubt due entirely to the conditions under which it has grown, from the crudest beginnings to its present proportions. Man, for example, is a culmination of perhaps millions of metamorphoses from the primal cell.’

‘This earth was at one time unfitted for animate life, by reason of internal heat, was it not?’ asked Tom.

‘It was. In fact there was a period in its existence, after it separated from its parent nebulous mass, now condensed into what we call the sun, when it was a huge ball of liquid incandescence, hundreds of thousands of miles in diameter—a vast mass of flaming hydrogen, sporting in the ethereal fields of the universe with its oxygen and other gaseous affinities, and giving birth to the varied and wonderful products which we behold

in the solid and liquid matters of our earth. Organic life is only one of the phases of productive development that is going on, not only on our earth, but throughout the universe.'

'Then life and death are simply parts of the general phenomena of change?' remarked Tom.

'Precisely; and life and death are not confined to organic beings on earth alone, but are phenomena of the universal law of evolution, to which all things, even the stars themselves, are subject. Though in the brief period of human existence, these heavenly bodies may appear to be unchanging, immutable, eternal, each and all had a beginning, and each and all will have an end.'

'I have read Sir William Herschel's account of the great nebulae. From these, then, it is supposed that all worlds and planetary systems are derived, is it not?' asked Tom.

'Yes; these are undoubtedly the laboratories in which worlds and world systems are formed. Here we have the materials out of which the wonders of creation are moulded, in their most plastic condition. From such mobile masses have our own solar system, and others of a like nature, been evolved. Laplace, that wonderful Frenchman, was the first to assert that hypothesis, which has become an accepted theory with many of our most eminent scientists, and is now generally accepted by the scientific world.

'According to Laplace's hypothesis, our sun, for example, in the remote past, was a vast nebular spot, of high temperature, revolving on its axis; and, at length, in consequence of continuous loss of heat, the matter of the mass became more and more compressed. That, in

accordance with prescribed mechanical laws, a free-floating ring separated itself from the nebular mass in the region of the equator.

‘The cooling being continuous, and the condensation of the surface-matter keeping pace with it, the ring-formation would, in due course, repeat itself, all rings working from west to east around the central mass, in harmony with the direction of the revolution of the latter. The persistence of these rings would depend on their perfect uniformity in structure and condensation, which is very unlikely; consequently they break up, and being still fluid assume globular forms. These glowing nebular globes then become planets, revolving round the sun, from which they are thrown off. The larger planets go through the same course, throwing off rings, which break up into satellites.’

‘And an end must come to even stars and worlds,’ reflected Tom.

‘Yes,’ said Warfield, ‘an end will inevitably come to all; but it will be individual extinction. The same creative principle must continue, and as old systems die out new ones come in. The systems will die first in their smaller members, however, the central masses or suns surviving longer. The reason is that the smaller masses radiate their heat energy quickest, this heat being produced as a consequence of their formation. And when it has finally disappeared, they will no doubt be resolved into formless cosmic dust, fitted for the work of re-creation by collection into nebulous bodies.’

‘Life, of course, is inseparable from heat?’ suggested Tom.

‘Yes — life is but one of the expressions of that energy

which is manifested in heat and motion. Our atmosphere and its gaseous contents are peculiar forms of heat or heat-matter. When this heat ceases, what we call cold—which is simply the absence of heat or heat-energy—succeeds. When the heat inherent in our atmosphere can no longer receive reinforcement from internal sources, the gases composing it will solidify, and the earth—as our moon did millions of years ago—will lose its last vestige of vitality; light will no longer illumine its surroundings, and it will wander blind and rayless for other millions of years, until the great heart of our system—the sun—ceases to beat, and then dissolution will set in, and the “wreck of matter and crush of worlds” will be realized.’

The conversation ceased for a few minutes, and both Gaston and his interesting new acquaintance seemed to be buried in thought. At last Tom broke the silence:

‘Mr. Warfield,’ he said, ‘I hope you will pardon me for persisting in asking you, who appear to be a master in the sciences, a question or two regarding the origin of the various species of animals which have inhabited, or that still inhabit the earth. Where, in your opinion, did organic life begin on the earth?’

‘I will give you my opinion, for what it is worth. We now know that the coldest sections of our globe are at the poles. Without holding that the exact position of the poles has not changed, it will be enough for me to say that when the cooling of the incandescent mass of our globe had begun, it was evidently at the poles. The condensation of the vapor resulting from combustion must have there produced the liquid combination of the two representative elements of heat and motion, and

consequently life on the earth—hydrogen and oxygen—and as a result we had water, the great menstruum in which organic life had its inception. Therefore, while the equatorial regions of the earth were still unfitted for organic life, the polar regions became the nurseries for the cruder and simpler organisms which preceded what we may call the higher and more complex ones. On such an hypothesis, therefore, we may conclude that organic forms originated at the poles, and will end at the equator, being driven thither by the encroachment of polar cold, as the earth loses its heat, and the sun fails to contribute enough of it to prevent such radical climatic changes.'

'Then,' said Tom, 'there was an origin in the creative processes of the earth that was crude and simple. Could such processes be originated under conditions which now exist on the earth?'

'No, indeed,' replied Warfield. 'That would be manifestly unlikely. Organic life—which is, after all, when rightly considered, a chemical process—must have had its beginning in conditions which originated, first, vegetative existence, that was attached to its surroundings; and, secondly, mobile or animal existence, that had the power to change or move about in its environment, first by instinctive or uneasy impulse, and, secondly, by force of will, which was brought into existence by the crudest form of reasoning. The reasoning power, thus developed—being called for more and more, as other organs of the animal were demanded by the necessities of movement, aggression, and appropriation—the brain, in its way, kept pace with animal development; until from the cruder forms more complex ones were evolved.

‘Now, as organic life had its crude beginnings in the cruder conditions of the creative processes of our globe, and as these conditions have given place to others which are rather sustaining than originative; developing more than formative; I cannot see how the conditions for original creative processes could now exist, or, in other words, that the strains of creation, which have culminated in man, the superior or the lower animals, could now be originated, any more than that the life-sustaining faculty could be restored to the moon—a thing which I believe it once possessed.

‘No, no! The law of change, which is ever-persisting, can not tolerate a return to crude conditions or processes, after the necessity for these have passed away. This arises from the consistent and sequential operation of the immutable law of change, which can not because it should not go backward, for the harmony of the universe evidently calls for progression in all its parts while the impelling energy endures.’

‘Then all things and conditions are the result of these great laws, even human slavery,’ ventured Tom.

‘Yes, they are; and the growing desire on the part of the people of a portion of the United States to get rid of slavery is just as natural; that is, the sentiment of abhorrence is necessary to arouse the action required to be taken to get rid of what is now regarded as a social evil, though at one time it was looked at as a social necessity. This is in the line of psychological and moral development. All thoughts, and impulses arising from them, therefore, are only the effects of the operation of the law of change—and change alone can endure; it, alone, so far as we know, is eternal!’

‘If I understand you rightly,’ said the young man, ‘our faculties have originated from the necessities of our environment. How do you account for the growth of the superior faculties, which are not directly necessary to our wants?’

‘Nature,’ replied Warfield, ‘if I may use that term to express existence and development, is not only responsive but it is even generous to our needs, and even to the desires which grow out of them. Faculties are, I may say, invented to meet the wishes as well as the necessities of existence. The keen eyesight and hearing of the Indian, as well as the wonderful power of scent in the dog, are evidences of response to needs; while the marvellous faculties of the brain—the power of abstract contemplation and reasoning—are evidences equally as strong in the higher direction.’

Twilight had come while the conversation recorded was being held, and its shades deepened into night. The huge steamer forged its way through a wavy field of liquid glass, as it seemed, leaving behind an angry wake of boiling surges, which, however, were lighted up by corruscating flashes of a phosphorescent character, so frequent and so general as to produce a luminous trail, that grew broader and fainter in the distance. The firmament above and around was studded with stars, bright, beautiful, and, to such minds as those of the two voyagers whose conversation we have been listening to, must have been suggestive of profound reflections.

There was a pause in the conversation. Both appeared to be engaged in drawing inspiration—in taking in draughts of ethereal delight—from the matchless scene. The silence of rapt contemplation prevailed for nearly

half an hour, neither appearing willing to break the spell.

Then the striking of the steamer's bell, and the call of the watch came in like a discord, and the glamor faded. But the witchery of the scene had impressed itself on the minds of the voyagers, and Warfield broke the silence by remarking, in precisely the same words that young Gaston was about to employ: 'How beautiful! How grand! How inspiring!'

'Yes,' replied Tom, 'it could not be surpassed for beauty, and I have no doubt that such glorious scenes as this have awakened the minds of men in the past to the desires of a paradise of just such quiet enjoyment as this has afforded us.'

'Probably. Well, I feel like retiring. Good night, my friend. Tomorrow we shall begin our French lessons.'

CHAPTER XII.

ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND — THROUGH FRANCE, TO ITALY —
IN ROME, THE ETERNAL CITY.

At breakfast on the following morning, Thomas Gaston again sat beside Warfield. There had been a change in the weather; a fresh wind was now blowing from the northwest, and the ship was rolling somewhat.

'We shall not have such another evening as that of yesterday,' said Warfield, 'probably during the entire trip; but it need not prevent us from prosecuting our studies; so after breakfast we will begin. At first it will

not be so easy for you, but by and by we will talk of common-place things in French, and in this way I am satisfied you will get along very well.'

'Thank you,' said Tom. 'But I do hope it will not become a bore to you.'

'It will be a pleasure. Besides, when you are tired we can talk philosophy, or something else.'

So the work of teaching French in a few days began, and was prosecuted with such success that before the Irish coast was sighted, Tom could do fairly well in a limited conversation, in French, on common matters.

As the steamer was forging its way along the Irish coast through St. George's Channel, young Gaston said to Warfield:

'I presume my best plan, on landing in Liverpool, will be to go at once to London, and from thence take a steamer up the Mediterranean to Rome?'

'To go to London directly from Liverpool is all right; but if you desire to reach Rome in the quickest time, the best route is from London by rail to Folkstone, and from there by steamer to Boulogne; thence by rail to Paris; Paris to Lyons by rail, diligence and water, and thence by boat to Marseilles. At that place you can take a steamer to Civita Vecchia, by way of Genoa, and from Civita Vecchia to Rome, by diligence, it is seventy-five miles. This route, however, will involve more expense than that by water.'

'I do not care for that,' said Tom. 'My object is to get there as quickly as I can, at any cost.'

Then Tom related to his now warm friend the exact nature of his mission to Rome. The gentleman thanked him for this confidence, and said he would give him a

note to a friend in Rome, who would show him attention and make his visit a pleasant and profitable one, so far as sight-seeing was concerned.

‘I was in and around Rome for several months something over a year ago,’ said Warfield, ‘and witnessed scenes which made my heart feel sad. It was a curious sight to behold the soldiers of Republican France overthrow the Republic of Italy, and it was a sad one, also. The first Napoleon established a Republic in Italy, nearly half a century ago; now, another Napoleon — President of the French Republic — has overthrown one established by the freedom-loving Italians, with the brave Garibaldi at their head, one of the noblest soldiers of the present century. This great man is not dead yet, and I predict for him a future of great achievement in connection with the freedom of Italy.’

‘Is he not now in the United States?’ asked Tom.

‘He is; but with the purpose of returning to Italy when opportunity offers, I am told; and, if I mistake not, he will return in less than five years.’

‘Is France satisfied with the Republic?’ asked Tom.

‘No; that is, the active elements in politics are not. Louis Napoleon is plotting to become Emperor, and he may attempt and carry a coup d’etat at any moment. This would no doubt serve as a key-note to a still more complicated condition of affairs in Europe, and where it all will end no one can foresee.’

‘Do you go beyond England?’ asked the young man.

‘Yes, — I go direct to Paris, and will accompany you that far,’ replied Warfield.

‘I am glad to hear that,’ said Tom, ‘for I esteem it a fine privilege to travel in your company.’

‘That you shall,’ was the hearty reply.

The Baltic steamed up the Mersey, and, about noon, a small steamer came alongside, took off the passengers and baggage, and carried them to the landing-stage, an immense floating pier, rendered necessary by the great rise and fall of the tide in the river.

After passing the custom house officers, the friends were driven to a hotel, where they had dinner, and then took the afternoon train for London.

‘There is much to be seen in Liverpool as well as London,’ said Warfield, ‘but you must content yourself with a glimpse of the fine buildings as we pass along; and, before the light fades, we can perhaps see a few of the fine old English manors, which line the route to London.’

Arriving in London in the night time, young Gaston would have been puzzled what to do, but his friend Warfield appeared to know the place well, and ordered the coach to proceed to Morley’s Hotel, on Trafalgar square, where rooms were obtained, and the travelers retired for the night.

Tom slept soundly, and was up early in the morning.

He was, however, anticipated by his friend, Warfield, who had been down before him, and was on the point of taking a walk before breakfast, in which the young man gladly joined him.

They did not go far beyond Charing Cross, however, but soon returned to the hotel, where they breakfasted, and then prepared for the business of the day.

‘The train will not leave for Folkstone until 8 o’clock this evening, so that we will have some time on our hands to view London. Have you any business that

you desire to transact in the city now?' asked Warfield.

'Yes; I wish to see my father's agent, who may enlighten me in regard to when brother Richard passed through London. Then I have some sterling exchange to get cashed, and letters of credit to obtain for the continent.'

'Very good,' said Warfield. 'I have, also, some business to transact, and will accompany you to the place, which is not far from here, where I'll leave you for half an hour, and call on my return.'

A carriage was called, and the friends were driven to the business section, where Tom easily found the firm that did business for his father in England. He there learned that Richard had arrived in London some two weeks before, and called on them to obtain exchange for the continent, and had started forward without delay to his destination.

Thomas Gaston delivered his letter of credit, but as he did not wish to draw any money on it, but only to get his bills of exchange turned into available money, the firm readily undertook to do this for him, and also to arrange for his passports and other matters pertaining to the journey on the Continent. Promising to forward these to his hotel, and desiring him to call on his return to London, when they would show him the city, the kindly merchants bade him good-bye, just as the carriage, with Warfield inside, stopped in front of the house.

'I see you have concluded your business,' said Warfield, 'and now we will return to the hotel. I have there some letters to write, after which we will take a carriage and drive to Hyde Park, where you can see the great Crystal Palace, about which so much has been

written and printed. It is certainly a modern wonder.'

In an hour's time, the messenger with money, passports, etc., came to the hotel, and by that time Warfield had finished his correspondence.

A carriage was ordered, and the friends were driven out to view the new wonder of the world—the great Crystal Palace. This was one of the sights Tom would not have missed seeing, for he desired to send a descriptive letter in regard to it to the Boston Times. But he was more than surprised at its extent. It had a front of more than one-third of a mile, besides its branches. It covered an area of eighteen acres, and under its vaulted transept were to be seen some large and stately trees that were growing in the park.

The structure was a wonder, the framework of iron seemed slight in comparison to the size of the building, and was in fact only a setting for the glass, so that the building was a veritable crystal palace, filled with the products of all nations, in bewildering variety and amount, and was visited by people of all nationalities by the hundreds of thousands, the low price of admittance (one shilling and sixpence) opening it to the poorest as well as the richest.

Tom was delighted with all he saw, and took copious notes as they walked around, his friend greatly aiding him in his observations by his knowledge of works of art and machinery of all kinds.

Returning to the hotel, Tom found that he had still four hours to spare before the train left for Folkstone, so he told his friend of his purpose to write a letter to the Boston paper, giving his impressions of the exhibition. He must also write to his father, mother, his old friend

Cluney, and to one or two of his good friends in Boston.

To this proposition Warfield readily agreed, and volunteered to read over his correspondence to the paper, and suggest improvements—an offer that was thankfully accepted.

Tom at once set to work, and in about two hours and a half had a letter of about two columns in length written, which Warfield was looking over with great interest.

‘My dear sir,’ he said at length, ‘you are a born journalist. You have caught, and epitomized, a great many things that should be of interest to the American reader. Your description of the building, its varied contents, and the scenes attending the exhibition, is excellent—could not be bettered in the same space. It is highly creditable, indeed. Mr. Gaston, you would make a fine war correspondent.’

‘Perhaps I would,’ said Tom, laughing; ‘but I fear I would be too fond of the excitement of the battle to think of describing it. I would want to take a hand in it.’

‘Perhaps so; but the novelty would soon wear off. You would, after a short experience, be more fascinated in watching the drama of the fight than in taking an active part in it—that is, getting into a situation where you could see only what was going on in your near vicinity.’

The letters were despatched to the post-office, dinner eaten, and the friends took the carriage for the railway station. As the clock struck 8 p. m. the train started for Folkstone, which is on the Kentish coast, some 80 miles from London. The train was not a fast one, for it

did not arrive at Folkstone until the following morning, giving plenty of time and opportunity for a good night's rest.

They went at once to a small steamer, which started to sea at 9 o'clock, and soon the white cliffs of Dover on the one hand, and those of Calais on the other, were distinctly visible; and presently the little steamer was tossing like a cockle-shell in the rough waters of the Straits of Dover. The passage, if rough, was but a short one, for in two hours from the time of starting the steamer was in the smooth water of the land-locked harbor of Boulogne, and secured to the wooden pier. One of the conspicuous things noted by young Gaston on the approach to Boulogne, was the tall column on which the statue of the Emperor Napoleon was placed.

'That monument,' said Warfield, 'is the statue of Napoleon, erected there by his army, in his honor. It was here, at Boulogne, in 1805, that Napoleon assembled an army of about 200,000 men, for the supposed purpose of invading England, but the execution of a treaty of alliance between that country and the continental powers caused him to abandon the project, if he ever really entertained it, so that the English can still boast that their women have never yet seen the smoke of an enemy's camp-fires.'

'Napoleon was indeed a wonderful man,' remarked young Gaston.

'Yes,' said Warfield, 'he was a military genius. He knew perhaps better than any man of his day how to mould bodies of men into vast engines of force, and to launch them like battering rams against living walls, to demolish them. Napoleon's men boasted that he made

them fight and win battles more with their feet than their hands.'

'Mere fighting, then, is not all that is required to win battles?' said Gaston.

'No, indeed. The best fighting may be done by the men who will be defeated.'

'That seems paradoxical,' observed Gaston.

'Yes; but it is sometimes true. It is not the killing of a great number of men that secures victory, but the disorganization of the opposing force, so that they cannot offer a united front against attack. Napoleon's great strength lay in the celerity of his movements and the audacity and strength of his attack. This was illustrated in his campaign in Austria in 1809, when by a succession of rapid movements and attacks he defeated the Austrian army in several successive battles, and finally so disorganized it by defeat and dispersion that he practically destroyed it for the time being, as an effective fighting engine.'

'I have sometimes thought,' said Tom, 'that I would like to be a soldier under such a man as Napoleon — to be a private, and rise from the ranks to a high position.'

'Never carry out such an idea as enlisting in the ranks,' said Warfield, with a smile, 'at least with the expectation of rising though personal bravery, where all are alike brave; though, if you should be foolish enough to enlist, it would be well to aim high, even if it were a hopeless ambition.'

'Has not a common soldier a chance to distinguish himself in war?'

'Rarely. Not one in ten thousand,' replied Warfield. 'An army is a machine, and the more perfect machine it

is, the more effective it can be made in the hands of an able general. The best soldier is the one who most exactly obeys orders and does the duties assigned to him. In fact, obedience to orders is the first principle inculcated in the discipline of an army, and that principle runs up through every rank, from the private to the general in command. The more perfect the obedience of the rank and file of an army, the easier it is to handle, and the more effective a force it becomes in the hands of an able general.

‘But an army is a complex machine, and it may be made much more formidable and effective by raising its morale, which can be best achieved by success in its operations and confidence in its commander. Napoleon’s success was due, first, to strict discipline in movement, and, secondly, to his ability to utilize this in overthrowing his enemy. His soldiers had the fullest confidence that if they obeyed his orders he would make them win the victory, so that they were always ready to obey; and if they met with temporary defeat, they did not blame him for it, but themselves. Napoleon was their idol, and they were ready at all times to sacrifice themselves for him.’

‘Fighting battles, I am told,’ said Tom, ‘is like playing chess.’

‘In a manner it may be likened to that; but I think a better illustration would be to compare two generals fighting a battle to two pugilists boxing. The necessity for guarding against the attacks of an opponent on weak points is the same, and the equal or greater necessity of giving effective blows is also indicated. The general, however, wields battalions, brigades, divisions, and even

army corps in his blows, and whenever he can deliver the strongest and heaviest blows at his opponent in the most vital and vulnerable parts, the more likely he is to be successful.

‘Before it comes to blows, however, both armies to a contest may manœuvre to obtain advantage of position; such, for example, as the guarding of one flank by water, swamp, or other natural obstruction, or choosing a hill or other natural feature of the ground to strengthen his centre, and await attack. If his choice is well made and his position a strong one, his opponent may yet move around him so as to compel a change of front and base. Napoleon’s success often hinged on deciding to attack when his enemy was not prepared for it, or was too confident in the position chosen, or would disarrange his plans by attack at a point that was least expected.’

The passengers were not long delayed by the customs officers, who were very courteous, and the friends were soon on board the cars and on their way to Paris. There was a peculiar swinging or vibratory motion to the cars, like the rolling of a ship, which was not at all agreeable, but Tom forgot it in the interest which the historic places he was passing through inspired, especially when recalled by so intelligent a man as his companion, who seemed to know the country intimately. Most of the country passed over in the 200 miles from Boulogne to Paris, was beautiful as well as historic, and gave evidence of the highest degree of cultivation. After a delightful ride, passing through Abbeville, Amiens, Chantilly, and other places of interest, the day closed just as the train passed into Paris by the gate of

St. Denis, and the travelers, after again undergoing inspection by customs officers, found their way to the Hotel des Princes, on the Rue Richelieu.

Here Warfield, after directing Tom how to proceed in the morning, parted with him. He handed him a letter of introduction to a friend in Rome, and said:

‘My friend, we have had a pleasant journey together from America, and I have learned to like you. We may never meet again, but if you should ever come to Europe again, or if on your return from Rome you might wish to find me, at this address you can trace me, if I am alive.’ He handed him a card, which Tom did not read, but in the excitement of the moment thrust into his pocket with the letter. Then he said, with emotion:

‘Mr. Warfield, if I believed in fate or special providence, I would say that it was one or the other which has made us companions on the voyage from America. You have not only instructed me in many things which are useful to know, but you have enlightened me on much that I knew in a way, but not with the confidence which I feel in such knowledge since talking with you. I shall remember your kindness and condescension to me—a mere stranger and a nobody—with gratitude, while I live. I have found in you a master mind, and recognize in you the only nobility which I would bow to—superior knowledge. If I return to Paris, and have the time to spare, I shall call on you, for I believe your invitation is given sincerely. If not—then I shall ever remember you.’

With a warm clasp of the hand, the friends parted. Tom’s eyes filled with tears.

Next morning Thomas Gaston proceeded to the

diligence—a large coach drawn by six horses—and was driven to the railway station at the north-east side of Paris. Here the diligence was lifted, bodily, from its wheels and placed on to a railway truck, and the train started for Tonnere, where the diligence was again transferred to wheels, and six horses carried it along to Dijon, some 213 miles from Paris, where it arrived next morning. After a short delay for refreshments, the coach started for Chalons, 43 miles distant, where it arrived in the evening.

From Chalons to Lyons the voyage was by river steamer, and from Lyons to Marseilles by steamer also.

If I were writing a book of travel, I might tell of the famous places passed through, their historic chateaus and other landmarks, many of them dating back to the times of the Roman occupation. Such things were seen by Thomas Gaston, and, by the aid of a guide-book, were recognized and appreciated in a way, though as a matter of fact, he was in a state of partial preoccupation, his mind being largely taken up with thoughts of his brother and of the new acquaintance he had parted with in Paris, whose identity he could not guess.

Remembering the letter given him by that gentleman—and he wondered he had not thought of it before—just as the steamer hove in sight of Marseilles, Thomas Gaston drew it forth from his pocket, and with it a card containing Warfield's address, which, to his intense chagrin, escaped from his hand and was carried away by the wind! His first impulse was almost to jump over after it, but of what avail?

He now looked at the letter in his hand for the first time, and was startled to read this name and address on it:

DR. VINCENT GASTON,
74, via della Croce, Rome.

There was certainly something very strange in this, he thought. The letter was sealed. But an idea occurred to him in connection with it, and that was that Dr. Gaston might know the address of his late friend, and at least could tell him who he was. This thought consoled him for the loss, in so heedless a manner, of the address given him.

It was just seventeen days from the time young Gaston parted with his father and Cluney on board the Baltic, at New York, that he found himself in the French Mediterranean port of Marseilles, famed more for being an unhealthy place than anything else in the minds of travelers. This year, however, it was more than ordinarily healthy, and as the cool nights of Autumn were coming on—it was the beginning of the second week in September—there was no danger of sickness.

On the following morning—Tuesday—a steamer of the Messageries Imperiales line was to sail for Genoa, Leghorn, and Civita Vecchia, and after putting up at the Hotel Richelieu, and getting dinner, our young traveler proceeded to the office of the company on the quay, and secured his passage to Civita Vecchia.

An early start was made by the steamer on the following morning, and Thomas Gaston was afforded a fine opportunity to see the whole of the mainland coast, and the off-lying islands of the Tuscan archipelago. These places were enhanced in beauty to his eyes by the fact that they had been the scenes of some of the most famous deeds recorded in the wondrous history of the Roman empire, and its numerous mediæval and modern

successors. On the mainland nearly every foot of ground had been fought over, until each one had a red record of violent deaths to bear witness to.

By the evening the steamer entered the fine harbor of the ancient city of Genoa, which on the land side is encircled by an amphitheatre of hills. After a short stay, to land freight and passengers, the steamer again put to sea, and at six o'clock on the following morning reached Leghorn.

Much to young Gaston's chagrin, a delay of about eleven hours was made in Leghorn, which had many places of interest; but Tom spent most of the time on board the steamer, writing letters descriptive of his travels, two of which he mailed in Leghorn.

At 5 o'clock in the afternoon—it was Wednesday—the steamer again put to sea, and, before darkness set in, passed between the islands of Corsica and Elba—the one famous as being the birthplace of the Great Napoleon, and the other the scene of his first exile, after his disastrous Russian campaign. Both islands were distinctly visible in the twilight glow, and the young traveler looked upon them with strange emotion.

‘Here, in this Italian peninsula,’ Tom reflected, ‘has been the cradle as well as the grave of many an ambitious, aspiring man, while on that little island, yonder, perhaps the greatest of them all was produced. And where are they all now? Gone back to nothingness. The animated dust which once contained such spirits has long since mingled with that of commoner mortals—no better, and no worse.

‘What is ambition, after all, but inflated pride! And what is pride? Is it not the quintessence of selfishness,

or is it not rather the result of that mysterious prompting of our nature—of all animate nature, in fact—that impels us to persist up to the verge of dissolution? Who can say what it is? To me it is a puzzle—one of the puzzles of existence!’

With such thoughts as these passing rapidly through his mind, young Gaston spent several hours on deck, the night being calm and cloudless, and then he retired to rest. At 5 o’clock in the morning he arose, and found the steamer nearing her destination. At 6 o’clock, with a bright sun shining, the steamer dropped anchor in the harbor of Civita Vecchia; and, after a tedious delay occasioned by the visit of inspection on the part of military and custom-house officers, the passengers and their baggage were landed by means of a row-boat.

The stage coach for Rome started soon after, and the ride of 75 miles to the Eternal City was inaugurated at a goodly pace.

If it were not for its historical associations, a more uninteresting country could hardly be imagined than that passed through, or rather by, for the road led along near the sea shore. Some ten miles inland could be seen the line of the Apennines, which seemed to run parallel with the coast, and formed a background for a picture of desolation.

The few people met with were ragged, squalid and dirty, and were anything but creditable to the government of the Catholic church, while beggars besieged the coach at every stopping place, and were the most persistent of their class young Gaston had ever dreamed of. But then it was his first experience of such debased mendicancy.

‘Why,’ said he, to himself, ‘these are but little better than savages — not as good, come to think of it, for the savage is in the line of development, while these are degenerate. What a comment their condition makes on misrule and oppression, church and state. It is terrible!’

This was rather a rude shock to his ideas of that land which was once the abode of giants among men. Was it possible, he mused, that he was traveling in what was at one time almost the centre of the great Roman Empire? Was this bare, uncultivated, desolate country at one time covered with towns, villages, sumptuous villas, gardens, pleasure-grounds, and cultivated fields, teeming with the harvest and the vintage? Was it on this ground that the masters of the world pursued their business and their pastimes?

Along these desolate plains marched the grand armies of Rome on their way to glory and conquest, and over these also rolled the tide of Gothic and Vandal invasion, that was to finally bring the proud city and empire to the dust — ‘the throne and grave of empires.’

When great nations become vain and effeminate, then brutality has its opportunity, and the culture, science, arts and civilization of centuries may be wrecked in an hour. ‘So passeth the glory of the world.’

One of the first objects noted, to signal the approach to the Eternal City, was the dome of St. Peter’s, which was observed when the coach was still about fifteen miles distant from Rome. Then the young man looked about him to discern some sign of suburban settlement and cultivation, but in vain. And this was prosperity under the benign rule of the church!

At length, just as the twilight had settled down into

darkness, the coach passed through the gate in the city wall, the *Porta Cavalleggeri*, as it is called. After a short delay, the coach resumed its way, encountering a number of French soldiers on duty, and passed by the immense colonnade of St. Peter's, and then crossed the Tiber on the only ancient Roman bridge that then spanned it, the *Ælian*. Then, after a drive of some two miles in the city, the coach paused in the spacious *Piazza del Popolo*, under the Pincian hill, comfortable accommodations being found at the *Hotel des Isles Britannique*. Here young Gaston learned that the waiters spoke fairly good English, so he was not called on to use his callow French with them, for which he was not sorry.

He made a hearty supper; and, feeling tired, and being satisfied that it would be a search to a disadvantage to look for his brother that evening, he concluded he would go to bed and have a good night's rest, which he proceeded to do.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN ROME — RICHARD ORDAINED A PRIEST — DR. VINCENT GASTON — ROMAN SCENES AND REFLECTIONS.

When Thomas Gaston awoke on the morning succeeding his arrival in Rome, he found that he had overslept himself, he being an early riser from habit. He dressed quickly, and went down to breakfast, after which he approached the landlord, and attempted to open a conversation with him in French. The landlord, who was a German, with a spice of German humor in him,

perceiving by his accent that the young man spoke English, said:

‘Vy don’t you speak de English, my frient?’

Tom laughed, and proceeded to make known his desires in his native tongue.

‘I would like,’ he said, ‘to find Dr. Vincent Gaston, via della Croce. Can you direct me where to go?’

The landlord gave him the direction, which was to go straight down the via del Corso, and the street he was in search of was the seventh on the left. Then he added—

‘Ah, I see—it is your oncle.’

Without affirming or contradicting this idea, the young man set out to find the doctor. He had concluded that this would be the best thing to do, for the doctor, who had lived for some time in Rome, could tell him just what to do in the matter of finding his brother, and reaching the Propaganda headquarters, where he would be most likely to be found.

After a brisk walk of about fifteen minutes, he reached the hotel at which Dr. Vincent Gaston was located. On ringing the bell, a servant in livery appeared, who looked at him in evident surprise, and, on hearing his desire, ushered him into a richly-furnished apartment, and withdrew.

In about fifteen minutes—it seemed two hours to the impatient waiter—the door opened, and a gentleman of middle age, wearing gold-bowed spectacles, walked briskly into the room.

‘Monsieur,’ he said, in French, ‘I am at your service.’

Tom looked curiously at the doctor, and with good reason, too, he thought, for in him he recognized a face

and form that might be that of his father's brother, so strong were the leading physical traits of his father displayed in him.

‘Pardon my intrusion, doctor,’ he said, in English, ‘for my business is not of a professional nature. But I have a letter of introduction from one of your friends—a gentleman who values you highly.’ And he handed him Warfield's letter.

The doctor read the letter with evident surprise, and some emotion. Then he looked at Thomas Gaston, took him warmly by the hand, and drew him close up to the window.

‘I want to look at you in a clear light,’ he said.

He looked at him closely, and then said, in a satisfied tone—‘Yes, you are a Gaston. There is no mistaking the leading facial and other characteristics of the family in you. Sit down—sit down. Now what can I do for you?’

Then Tom told him the purport of his mission to Rome; and that the first thing he desired to do was to find his brother, who would no doubt be at or near the College of the Propaganda.

‘That is not far distant,’ said Dr. Gaston. ‘It is in the Piazza di Spagna, at the end of this street. I will go with you.’

On the way Tom told the doctor how anxious he was to find his brother, and save him from becoming a priest, as a wife and good fortune awaited him. But if he was ordained, then it would not be wise to say anything to him about it.

‘I understand,’ said Dr. Gaston, ‘and I will be discreet. There are two hotels near the college—the

Europa and the Hotel de Londres. We will try the Europa first — your brother may be there.'

But they were disappointed in this. At the Hotel de Londres, however, they found Richard, in company with several young ecclesiastics, all foreigners, and most of them from different countries, one being from China.

If an angel had appeared to Richard, he would not have been more surprised than to see his brother Tom in Rome.

'Why, Tom,' he said, after a warm embrace and greeting, 'you are the last person I would dream of seeing here. Has anything happened at home?'

'Father and mother and all friends are well. How is it with you? Am I in time to be present at your ordination?'

'I regret that you are not,' replied Richard. 'I was ordained three days ago.'

Tom felt as if he had received a blow on the head with a sledge-hammer, but he had such a perfect command of his face that the smile on it did not waver. He said, pleasantly:

'Well, I regret that I am too late.' There was a bitterness in his tone, which, however, Richard did not notice, but which was detected by Dr. Gaston. Turning to the latter, Tom said:

'Brother, let me introduce a friend, doctor' —

Richard had fixed his gaze on the doctor, and made an impulsive move towards him.

'Surely,' he said, 'this is not' —

He was about to say 'father,' and if the doctor had been ten or fifteen years younger he might have said it; but he paused, still gazing on him.

‘No,’ said Tom. ‘Not father Gaston, but doctor Gaston.’

‘If your moustache were removed,’ said Richard, after a warm greeting, ‘I would still take you to be my father. How strange! Tom would pass for your son. I am hardly a Gaston, but resemble the people of my Irish mother, I am told.’

After some further conversation, in the course of which it was arranged that Richard and Thomas would meet at the doctor’s residence that afternoon, Tom took his leave, and left the hotel with the doctor.

‘I am sick at heart,’ he said, ‘to find my mission of no avail. My head is almost bursting, doctor—what shall I do? A sedative—some rest—eh?’

‘Come with me,’ said the kind physician, ‘and I will give you a sedative, and you can have a quiet rest in my house until evening.’

Tom accepted the offer of his new friend, who gave him a powder in a glass of water. ‘This will make you sleep,’ he said, ‘and that will answer, for what you now need is temporary oblivion.’

‘I know that,’ said Thomas, as he drained the glass, and retired to the room assigned him. When he awoke it was evening, and darkness covered the city. Hastily arranging his apparel, he opened the door of his room, and, as he stepped over the threshold, Dr. Gaston greeted him with:

‘Well, my dear young friend, how are you feeling now?’

‘I am all right, doctor. The narcotic you gave me did the business—warded off the blow—and I can now look fate in the face. Has my brother arrived?’

‘He has been here for nearly an hour, and we have been entertaining him. He is bright and amiable.’

‘Do you gather that he has any suspicion of my real motive in following him,’ asked Thomas.

‘I judge that he has no suspicion of the real cause,’ replied the doctor.

‘I am glad to know it. If he suspected the truth, I fear it might unhinge him. He is inclined to be impulsive.’

‘Now,’ said the doctor, ‘for refreshment. You must eat a special dish, which I have had prepared for you. While eating it, I shall leave you alone. When done, you can come into the salon, which a servant will show you to,’ and leading the young man to the family refectory, he placed him at a table, and directed the servant to wait on him. The dish was new to the young man, but he relished it and ate heartily. Then he sought the salon, where he found the doctor, his wife, his brother Richard, and a young lady who was introduced to him as Miss Beatrice Gaston.

The doctor’s wife, he noticed, was very much younger than her husband—not over forty, while he was evidently over sixty. The daughter was about eighteen years of age, but resembled her mother, who was a lady of Roman birth and family, and very beautiful, intelligent and agreeable.

Thomas Gaston explained to his brother that fatigue after his journey induced him to seek rest, and then he joined in the social talk of the family. In introducing his daughter, Dr. Gaston said that she was one of three children, the other two being males. One, named Richard, was twenty years of age, and was at that time

in France, at the Polytechnic school of Paris, while the other, about sixteen years of age, was at an academy in Milan. His name was the same as that of his father. Dr. Gaston was a Frenchman, and like all his countrymen was proud of the distinction.

‘So you see,’ said Dr. Gaston, ‘that we have a Richard in our family. It is an old family Christian name of the Gastons.’

‘That was my grandfather’s as well as my father’s name,’ said Thomas.

‘Do you know anything of your family history?’ asked the doctor.

Thomas told him all he knew, which was not much, but said he would obtain all his father knew of it and send it to him by letter. ‘For,’ said he, ‘I am convinced of our family relationship, though how remote it may be it is not easy to guess.’

‘I shall await your account with impatience,’ said the doctor.

‘By the way,’ said Thomas, ‘can you tell me who my traveling companion was, who called himself Warfield? He gave me an address, which he said would find him in Paris,’ and then he explained to the doctor how he lost it.

‘I cannot tell you who he is,’ replied Dr. Gaston, ‘for reasons which I cannot now explain. In fact, I may say that he is something of a mystery to me, though I know his name and rank. He is a nobleman by birth, but a democrat by choice. He is a soldier, who has seen service, and a scholar and scientist. In some respects he is an enigma. I’ll give you an example. While sympathizing with the Republicans who held Rome two years ago, he, yet, under Gen. Oudinot, directed the siege

operations against the city, which ended in its capitulation. I have reason to believe, however, that he facilitated the escape of Garibaldi and his followers. I made his acquaintance while active in the hospitals here, and saved his left arm from amputation—the bone being shattered by a musket ball. The arm is now good as new, but it is fully three inches shorter than the right one.'

'I never noticed it,' said Thomas.

The evening was agreeably spent by the brothers at the Gastons', and they then departed for their hotels, after arranging to meet on the next morning. 'I want to talk with you, Tom, about home and other matters,' said Richard. 'It will be Sunday, you know,' he added, 'but we shall have an opportunity to talk before it is time to go to mass. I think you will like to go to St. Peter's with me.'

'I would like to go,' replied Thomas, and the brothers parted for the night.

Early on Sunday morning Richard called at the hotel where his brother was stopping in the Piazza del Popolo. Thomas had finished breakfast, and when his brother called on him he took him at once to his apartments.

'Now, that we are alone, Tom,' said Richard, 'let me ask you the real motive of your following after me so quickly to Rome? I am satisfied that the reason you gave me yesterday—to see me ordained—was not the real one, for I know you have shared with others the opposition to my choice of profession.'

'Why were you in such a hurry to be ordained?' asked Thomas, avoiding the question. 'I supposed you would have to undergo an examination, and submit to more or

less of probationary delay. But of course I am ignorant of such procedure.'

'That would have been the case,' replied Richard, 'were it not for the letters which I brought to the head of the Propaganda, from the principal of the college in Montreal, as well as from the Bishop of Boston. Only a mere formal examination was made, which was satisfactory, and, as they were about to ordain a number of young men on Wednesday, I concluded that it would be best for me to take the vows and be ordained. But you have not answered my question as to what brought you to Rome, Tom.'

'I'll tell you,' said Thomas. 'Father came on to Boston, hoping to intercept you, so that you could transact some business for him in London. But you had gone, and he seemed so disappointed that I volunteered to go for him. Then, it struck me, that it would be no harm for me to follow you on to Rome, and try and dissuade you from the determination to become a priest. But I suppose it would have been useless, even if I had arrived before the event occurred. Well, I have had a glimpse of Europe, at any rate, and that is something. What do you purpose doing next?'

'I shall stay in Rome for a few months, perhaps till spring. There are many things here which I want to see and study, and if I do not take advantage of the present, I may never have another opportunity of doing it,' replied Richard. Then he asked:

'How long shall you stay, Tom?'

'Not long,' replied Thomas. 'I must finish my college course, and obtain my degree. I will take a gallop around with the doctor, and then go home.'

‘Dr. Gaston — isn’t it a singular thing that you should have run across him? I have no doubt but he is of our family. He is the picture of father, so far as general features are concerned, only he is considerably older. Well, now, will you go with me to St. Peter’s church to mass?’ asked Richard. ‘I am told that it is a notable celebration, and that His Holiness will be present.’

‘I will go,’ said Thomas. ‘It will no doubt be a show worth seeing — a spectacle, I mean,’ he quickly added, seeing that his remark displeased his brother.

A carriage was called, and the brothers proceeded to St. Peter’s, where the pontifical high mass was celebrated, with all the pomp and ceremony pertaining to such an august religious rite. The spectacle was a brilliant one, indeed, though to Thomas Gaston, who looked upon it more as a theatrical representation than anything else, there was a kind of mockery in the whole thing, and his irreverent fancy pictured the affair as being carried out by skeletons instead of men, and so real did this fancy for the moment appear to him that he imagined he heard the rattling of dry bones under the richly embroidered vestments of the hundreds of ecclesiastics who took part in the ceremony.

The great church edifice of St. Peter’s itself was a wonder and revelation of art and architecture to him. He had read descriptions of it, but they were tame in comparison to the reality.

‘What a glorious work of skill and art it is,’ he mused, ‘and it not inaptly typifies the genius of a religion that feeds the imagination with fables, while it excites the fancy by the help of such show and tinsel as all this is. And yet I have no doubt that many of these poor mortals,

who play the part of puppets in this show, believe that they are doing God a service. They are animated no doubt by the same spirit that swayed the priests of Isis thousands of years ago; and probably their sacrifice is just as significant in its way — but no more.'

Then his eyes wandered over the interior of the church, which was rich and magnificent beyond anything he had ever dreamed of. The four great pillars supporting the vast dome, appeared like colossi to him, with the burden of heaven's vault resting on their heads.

'I do not wonder, after all,' mused Tom, 'that, in such a magnificent church as this, dedicated to the Creator of the Universe, there should be more or less of inspiration to minds which are reverentially inclined; and that in it a man would feel his own littleness, and thereby exalt the greatness of the God it is dedicated to.'

'And yet, after all, when rightly considered, this should be regarded rather as a fane of deified art; for, surely, in this building art has wrought its most godlike achievement — a poem of exquisite grandeur and beauty. But to me it seems incomplete. Like the church, of which this pile may be said to be the architectural representation, art is everything, and science nothing. It is grand and beautiful, appealing to the imagination altogether; but dull, plodding life — the life of the world — is far removed from it. It is the portal of heaven, the visible throne of the invisible God, to the common mind, when, after all, it is but the embodiment of the artistic conceptions of man — nothing more — where beautiful thoughts have been carved and painted into an objective representation of the dreams of the past and hopes of the future; where the senses are lulled by

sweet music into a kind of rapt abstraction — an ecstatic condition somewhat akin the pleasures of narcotism, and usually attended with the same reactionary symptoms.'

Tom could not restrain the agnostic and diagnostic habit, even in the sacred hall of St. Peter's. And while he thus mused, his pious brother prayed, devoutly, no doubt; for faith made the occasion to him one of the grand opportunities of approaching nearest to that God who promised to be with his church to the end.

After services at St. Peter's, the brothers took carriage for the hotel in the Piazza del Popolo, where it had been agreed that Richard would stop and dine with his brother.

At the table, Tom—who was abstemious by habit—noticed that Richard showed a fondness for the strong Italian wine, which was served at his suggestion.

'Dick,' he said, 'do you like that wine, and have you drank much of it since coming to Rome?'

'I have learned to like it,' was the reply, 'but indulge in it only at meal times.'

'I do not seek to criticise your habit, brother, but you will pardon me if I utter a word or two of caution in regard to the use of wine and spirits. It is a habit that often grows quickly to dangerous proportions, and, what is most strange, the one who acquires and practises it to excess is the one who is the last to realize it.'

'I do not fear it,' replied the young priest. 'If I should find it were getting the better of me, I could and would leave it off instantly.'

Nothing more was said on this subject.

'Have you written home since you were ordained?' asked Tom.

‘I have not,’ was the reply. ‘But I suppose I ought to write, and let our parents know about it.’

‘Then I think you should write tonight. The mail leaves in the morning. I have pens and paper. Why not write this afternoon — after dinner — and I will mail it with mine in the morning? Besides letters to father and mother, I shall write to Master Cluney, and shall also send a letter to the Times, descriptive of the service at St. Peter’s church today.’

This was agreed to, and, after dinner, Richard wrote a letter to his parents, which he gave to his brother to mail. Then he went off to attend vesper services at the church of the Propaganda, leaving Tom alone to finish his correspondence.

On Monday morning, Dr. Gaston called on Tom, and both went to the hotel where Richard was. The three then proceeded to take a view of the city, from the tower which crowns the capitol, on the Capitoline hill. Here the various historic places were pointed out: the Forum at the foot of the hill; the ruins of the palace of the Cæsars, on Mount Palatine, opposite; the ruins of the Coliseum at the foot of that hill; the various grand ancient baths — of Caracalla, of Titus, and of Diocletian; and in fact all of the bewildering array of historic objects to be seen from this vantage-ground in that most historic city of the world, which had survived the vicissitudes of empires and dynasties, but retained features of each and all of them — all these were viewed.

Here were seen the monuments of the heroes and demi-gods among men! Here was, in one respect, the cradle of much of the literature and many of the arts and sciences of the modern world. Here dwelt the titans

of the human race—the masters of the world, in their time. In this splendid view, Thomas Gaston felt that he had realized the dream of his youth.

The doctor pointed out the various historic objects, and rapidly outlined their history, like one thoroughly familiar with the salient features of the panorama. When the doctor had finished, promising to give details in the visits with the brothers to the various points indicated, Tom said, reflectively:

‘Doctor, it is grand! But there is a sadness of heart in contemplating it. It curiously illustrates the paradox of existence, in the fact that nothing so strongly proves man’s littleness as his greatness. Here, a magnificent civilization was built up, after centuries of progressive effort. Then, when luxury and the ambitious rivalries of the great men had weakened the nation, the hordes of a barbaric king in seven days reduced it to a heap of smouldering ruins.

‘The conquerors were, in their turn, conquered—and this seems equally strange—by the ghostly power; by the representatives of the kingdom which is not of this world.’

‘Yes,’ said the doctor, ‘and this ghostly power has not only spread the gospel of Christianity throughout the world, but its missionaries have carried the literature, art and science of Rome into every nation.’

‘That is true,’ replied Tom, ‘but, while aiding in this way, it has enslaved as well as enlightened. It has cultivated the intellect, but at the same time has fettered the mind. In this once glorious country, I should say, the common people have grown gray in suffering under despotic rule. It is now a country of princes and

of beggars; of toilers who work, and of idlers who pray. Perhaps,' added Tom, smiling at the conceit, 'if the praying part of the people would work more, and the workers had more leisure to improve their minds, there might be a better condition of things brought about.'

The doctor smiled, and said: 'Nephew — allow me to call you that, for convenience — you are original, at least, in your mode of thinking, and this, I judge, comes from your American habit of thought, which is utilitarian. In one respect, however, you are right. In Italy there are too many ecclesiastics — too many monks — resident, I mean. It has become the fashion to devote at least one of a family — sometimes it is several — to the service of the church. This has become so great a feature of the Italian social condition that political economists are beginning to see the evil of it in an economic sense. Where the priests of the church are active workers, and do practical good among the people, it is all right. But where they simply live in communities, for the gratification of their own personal selfishness — however good it may be — the conviction is abroad that the result is not really good for the nation, and the Italian nationalists are extremely exercised and restless in regard to it, and many of the leaders are driven into infidelity as a consequence; for, once the utility of an institution comes into question, its sacred character itself becomes open to criticism.'

Thomas Gaston was so fascinated with Rome that he remained there for two weeks, going either alone or with his brother, or with Dr. Gaston, or both, to various points of interest, and enjoying his visit to the Eternal City in the best and most practical way, for if Tom was anything

he was practical. He spent many pleasant evenings in the house of Dr. Gaston, and was pleased with his daughter, who was a very intelligent and unsentimental young lady, and was very sensible and practical, without being unfeminine.

Richard seemed wedded to Rome. To him it was a Mecca, indeed, and his brother could see that he would only leave it with an effort.

The time came for departure, however, and for mutual regrets. Arrangements for correspondence with Dr. Gaston and his daughter, and with his brother were made by Tom; and one beautiful morning in September, Thomas Gaston bade adieu to Rome, and turned his face westward toward his Mecca, which was Boston.

CHAPTER XIV.

UNWELCOME NEWS AT CHEBUCTO — ITS EFFECT ON MR. WARDEN — AGNES' RESOLVE.

It was an evening in the early part of October, and a fine autumn day was drawing to a close. The steamer had arrived in Chebucto with the mail, and among the impatient waiters on the outside for its distribution was merchant Gaston. With him was James Warden, now his warm friend. The latter had rallied in his business affairs, and it looked as if his trouble was nearly over. He expected good news from his agents in London in the mail that just came in.

‘I do hope,’ he said to Mr. Gaston, ‘that you will have good news from the boys in Rome. It will please me more than I can tell to learn that Tom has arrived in time to save Richard from becoming a priest.’

‘It will please all,’ replied Mr. Gaston. ‘Even my wife is now warmly interested in the matter, and she loves Agnes like a daughter.’

The mail was at length delivered, and Richard Gaston had two letters postmarked “Roma”—one in Tom’s handwriting, and the other in Richard’s. James Warden had also the expected letter from his London agent. But he did not open it, preferring, first, to hear of the course of events in Rome.

Richard Gaston opened Tom’s letter, and the first line gave him the whole story in a few words—‘I was too late. Dick has become a priest.’ His hand trembled, and his face showed deep emotion.

‘The news is bad, I see,’ said Warden.

‘It is,’ replied Gaston. ‘Dick has taken the irrevocable step—he has been ordained a priest.’

‘God help Agnes!’ exclaimed Mr. Warden. ‘And me,’ he added bitterly. ‘It is I who am responsible for it all—for the wreck of their happiness!’ and he turned about, and, with a drooping head, wended his way homeward.

Agnes and her mother were on the lookout for Mr. Warden, as they expected he would see Mr. Gaston, and learn if he had received news from Rome. When they saw him approaching, with bowed head and spiritless gait, their woman’s wit divined that bad news had been received—bad news for Agnes.

When Mr. Warden entered the house, he found the

ladies awaiting him; and was puzzled what to say or do. He had not the heart to tell it all, but evaded direct knowledge of what had happened, by saying—

‘I fear Mr. Gaston has received unwelcome news, judging from the expression of his face, when he opened his letter and glanced at it in the post-office.’

That was all he said, and neither his wife nor Agnes cared to ask him any questions. Agnes, however, was bound to know the truth, and, leaving the room quietly, she slipped out of the house, and went to the Gaston mansion.

Here she found Mr. and Mrs. Gaston in the sitting room. The former had just finished reading the letters he had received to his wife, who was in tears. When Agnes entered the room, and saw the condition of affairs, she guessed the full truth. Hope had in the last few weeks restored the delicate pink roses of health to her face; but now it was deathly pale. Mrs. Gaston looked up at her as she entered, and seeing that she was already in misery, opened her womanly heart and arms to her, and Agnes sank into those arms, sobbing as if her heart would break. It was a great relief to the poor girl, for her heart had been almost bursting with suppressed emotion, and this was her first break-down.

Mr. Gaston looked at the two weeping women for some minutes in silence, until they grew somewhat calm. Then he said—

‘My poor Agnes, you have come over to share our sorrow, and it is proper that you should. Our mutual sorrow should be shared in common.’

‘Oh!’ said Agnes, in agony. ‘I feel that this is a judgment on me, for being so set with Richard in the matter.’

- I believed too strongly in obedience to my father's behest. But my eyes are now opened. I should have told him to wait, and might have foreseen that my father's cruel enmity would not last always. But it is too late to repine,' she said, drying her tears. 'We must now do all we can to sustain him in the holy office he has assumed.'

'I think there was more or less of fault on Richard's part, also,' said Mr. Gaston. 'I will say nothing against your father now, Agnes. He seems to feel the full force of the punishment, and takes it to heart greatly. I sincerely pity him.'

'So do I,' said Mrs. Gaston, 'though he never had any good reason for his enmity to us. But I forgive him, and hope God will. The only feeling I now have about it is that, if it were not for his enmity, you, my dear, would have a good man for a husband, while I would have a daughter in you. He has prevented it.'

'Well, mother,' said Agnes, 'and you will please let me call you mother,—there is no helping what has happened. We have all erred somewhat—I more than Richard—but it cannot be helped. We must try to make life happy to him, by aiding and encouraging him in the work he will do.'

'Well,' said the mother, 'I hope we shall,' and she sighed.

'You do not purpose, then,' said Mr. Gaston, to Agnes, 'to renounce interest in the world?'

'No; I shall keep on as I am,' said Agnes. 'Father and mother will require my services while they live, and I can look after them, and still have time to spare to help and encourage Richard in his good work. If I can't be

his wife, I can be his helper. If he has a mission, why cannot I have one in conjunction with him?’

‘Then you still love him?’ asked Mr. Gaston. ‘And is it possible that you would ever think of another?’

‘Never, sir,’ she replied. ‘It is not my nature to be changeable. I can love but one, and once only.’

‘It is a pity,’ he said, ‘that the world was not made up of people like you. Affection, sincerity, and constancy are three cardinal virtues.’

‘I hope, when he comes home, Richard will never hear of the plan to recall him from the priesthood,’ said Agnes, after she had read the letters of the brothers, which the father had handed to her.

‘I sincerely hope he will not,’ chimed in the mother, ‘for he is a peculiar boy — not like Tom, who is made of iron — and the knowledge of such a thing might upset him.’

‘I think,’ said Mr. Gaston, ‘that the facts in the case are not known here outside of our families, and not likely to be, so we need not fear any trouble from that source.’

In conversation like this these good people gradually talked themselves into a kind of philosophically-resigned condition of mind; and, after an hour spent in discussing the situation, Agnes returned home feeling much better and stronger in faith and purpose than when she had left it.

She could see that, beginning with her father’s foolish enmity towards Mr. Gaston, there had been a series of blunders, first, on her part, and then on Richard’s in being so impatient and hopeless of delay. But Agnes had strong common sense, and, now that her lover was

lost to her forever as a husband, he could still be her friend, and she a friend to him. In his company she could still be happy, and then it was a consolation to know that no other woman would possess him.

Yes; she would still cling to him — to the life-interests of her own family and of his. She would marry no other man; neither would she ever renounce the world. In fact, she began already to feel a kind of bitterness against the church which had taken her lover from her. And she contrasted the life of a priest with that of a minister of the Protestant faith, who could take a wife and surround himself with all the blessings of humanity, which a celibate could never enjoy. Did God, she asked herself, require such a sacrifice? If he did, she could not see the justice of it. Must a priest be forever debarred from the pleasures of affection — the joys of paternity?

The more she studied this subject, the more her heart rebelled against a system of what seemed to be ecclesiastical tyranny. She little understood that stern, relentless system of usage and discipline which treats the men in the ranks of the Catholic priesthood as so many parts of a complex machine, whose functions are clearly defined, and whose efficiency is estimated in exact proportion to the manner in which the fundamental principle of their connection with the army of the church is observed, namely, obedience. For, as a matter of fact, the priest is held to the same order and discipline that the soldier is, and hence his efficiency, or rather the efficiency and power of the grand but heartless church government to which he is subject.

On entering her home, Agnes found her father and

mother in earnest conversation. Her mother had evidently been weeping, for her eyes were red and swollen. Her father appeared more than usually depressed. He said to his daughter:

‘Well, Agnes, I suppose you know the worst.’

‘Yes, father. The news is bad, but repining will not help it. I think we’d better make the best of the situation; and go on, as if mistakes were not beyond remedy.’

‘I am glad to hear you talk so bravely and sensibly, Agnes,’ said the father. ‘It will enable me to bear up better. But do you know, my dear, that I also have had bad news by the mail? It seems as if the devil of bad luck were in close pursuit of my vessels; the one that was sold—or rather would have been when she returned from a voyage to Leghorn—has been lost, and instead of getting five thousand pounds for her, I have a prospect of getting only about two thousand, insurance. Well, after it is settled, out of whatever I get, Richard Gaston must be paid, first and foremost. But—if things go on much longer as they have gone of late—I fear you will see me bankrupt before six months have passed away.’

‘I hope not—oh, that would be terrible,’ said Mrs. Warden.

‘I hope not, too,’ said Agnes, ‘but if it should come, I would not flinch. We can better bear poverty than disgrace any time. But, dear father, I hope things are not so bad and gloomy as you think they are.’

‘They are bad enough, Agnes, and I have not the vigor to face reverses which I had some years ago; and then, I do not feel so hopeful; but I will struggle and do the best I can. The business outlook, however,

added to the other trouble for which I am mainly responsible, has practically unnerved me. I now feel humiliated and ashamed of what I have done.'

Agnes rose, impulsively, and, going over to her father, put her arms about his neck.

'Father,' she said, 'do not feel unhappy on my account. It will do no good. I shall remember, to my dying day, how ready you were, when you came to your own self, to undo if possible what had been done. But fate has been against us. It is the will of God, and who can properly murmur at that. He orders all things for the best, we are told, and it would be a sin to repine. I have accepted the cross, and will bear it patiently. I shall do all that I can to make you and mother happy while we live.'

'We cannot ask such a sacrifice from you,' said Mr. Warden. 'You can marry, and marry well, Agnes; and it would not be right to have you refuse a good position in life for two old people, who would in any event be dear to you.'

'Father,' replied Agnes, 'I will not marry. My duty is with you and mother, and I shall fulfil it. As to marrying well,' she added, with a sadness in her tone, 'even if I should want to marry at all, it would be different as to whether I was the daughter of rich James Warden, or of James Warden the bankrupt. The young men who might want to marry the one would, perhaps, hardly care to marry the other. No. The die is cast. I stay with you, and I hope it will be for many years.'

'God bless you, my daughter,' said Warden.

'Agnes,' said the mother, 'I am sorry for your decision; but I know you will live up to it, so it is

perhaps best to say nothing more about it. Let us make the best of things, and do all we can to cheer and help your father. He has need of it.'

Now that Warden showed signs of weakness, his wife began to assume an individuality which before had been merged into his. She and Agnes were now the strong members of the firm, at least in the matter of giving tone and hopefulness to the mind of the man, who, but a few months before, possessed the supreme will of the family.'

John Cluney, who, of course, was in the family secrets of the Gaston and Warden families, so far as the matter of the affairs between the younger members was concerned, called at the Gaston mansion shortly after Agnes had left.

'The news from Rome is bad,' said Mr. Gaston in reply to a question from Cluney, if he had received letters. 'It is all over with Richard, so far as marriage is concerned. He was ordained before Tom arrived.'

'Yes; Tom wrote me to that effect. Does Agnes know of it?' asked the schoolmaster, 'and how did she take it?' he further asked when a nod indicated that she had.

'She took it bravely,' said Mr. Gaston, 'after the first burst of feeling was over,' and then he described the scene which occurred shortly before Cluney came in.

'That was noble,' replied the schoolmaster, 'but just like her. She has more bravery, more character, than any girl I have ever met. She will not marry anyone, now that Richard is beyond her reach. But she will do just what she says she will; be a good and sustaining friend to him.' He added to himself, 'but I hope not a dangerous one.'

‘Richard must never know how near he was to happiness, and missed it,’ said Mrs. Gaston. ‘It would upset him, I fear, if he did.’

‘He must never know it—at least for many years,’ said Cluney. ‘Time, and the formation of the priestly habit, will no doubt reconcile him to fate, in the end.’

Cluney did not tell of the discovery by Tom of the verses which Richard had written to Agnes. He thought it better to suppress that fact, for a knowledge of it by the parents would do no good, and might create apprehension in their minds.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RETURN HOME OF THE YOUNG PRIEST—HIS FIRST MASS, AND HIS SERMON.

Chebucto, 1852. It was near the latter part of June, when the summer garments of the forests and fields were a soft and lovely green.

In those northern latitudes there is practically no spring, the transition from winter being rapid and wonderful, which can be accounted for in part by the fact that the length of day is from sixteen to eighteen hours.

Vegetation at this season is very rapid. In a week from the opening of the buds the leaves of the trees attain half their growth, and grass grows into a surprising luxuriance in a few days. In the cultivated fields,

oats, barley and wheat hid the reddish soil, the potato stalks were just above ground, and the cherry trees in the gardens were still hardly out of blossom. In the meadows the strawberry blooms lightened the green.

It was Sunday forenoon and the church bells were tolling the hour of service. Among the Catholic worshippers all were agog. A new priest was to celebrate mass, and this priest had been a boy who had grown up among them.

Rev. Richard Gaston, and his brother, Dr. Thomas Gaston, had arrived home two days before, and it was known that Father Tom McMahon had invited the young priest to celebrate high mass on that day, and great was the expectation in consequence.

Before the hour of service, many of the parishoners were on hand to meet the young ecclesiastic. They all knew him, and liked him, as well for his own sake as for that of his father. After a while the young priest, in company with Father McMahon, came down the lane from the parsonage to the church. The contrast between the two priests was great. Father Tom was medium-sized, fat and stumpy, with fat cheeks, florid complexion, small red eyes, carrotty hair tinged with gray—he was over sixty—and a short, turned-up nose. Richard Gaston—well, the reader will remember how he looked. He was indeed a handsome fellow, too handsome to be a priest.

As the two ecclesiastics approached the people in front of the church, the young one ran his eyes over the well-remembered faces of all who had collected there, and a gleam of satisfaction shone in his eyes as he noted how strong and friendly an interest was manifested in

him by all. They came forward spontaneously, many of them hat in hand, and bade him a warm welcome.

To these he said: 'Put on your hats, gentlemen. I have done nothing as yet to merit such peculiar respect. You are the older, and it is I who ought to take my hat off to you.' Handshaking and greetings over, the young man started to go into the church. In the vestibule he encountered many of the women of the parish, nearly all of whom he knew, and warmly greeted; the younger ones he simply passed with a pleasant word. Among the former was Mrs. Warden. He stopped to speak with her.

'Mrs. Warden,' he said, 'I do not see your husband here, and want to inquire about his health, for I hear he has not been very well.'

'He is not here now,' said Mrs. Warden, 'but will try to be up in time for mass. He is not well; and is low spirited.'

'I hope he will soon be all right,' said Richard. Then turning to Agnes, who stood beside her mother, he took her hand in his—a hand that trembled—and looked into her Madonna-like face and eyes: 'Agnes,' he said, 'I am glad to meet you here, and hope to hear your voice in the choir float above all the others, as it did in the time past. It will be a great encouragement to me.'

'Then it will float above the others,' said Agnes, 'for I want it to help you.'

'God bless you, Agnes,' he said, and passed into the church.

While the young priest was robing himself for the ceremony of the mass, which he was to celebrate, the choir began singing one of those glorious compositions,

those noble hymns, which make the services in Catholic churches—even with all the apparently absurd kneelings, standing up and sitting down at frequent intervals, genuflections, etc.—not only tolerable but even enjoyable to the lover of good music. The music, from violin, clarinet and flute, was none of the best—there was no organ—but the singing was good enough to cause the majestic notes of the anthem to sweep up the nave and aisles of the church to the chancel in throbbing waves of devotional harmony. In this hymn, high above all voices, and yet in harmony with them, was a full, rich soprano voice—a voice which the young priest remembered only too well, for he, too, when a youth, sang the tenor part to it in the same choir. The voice, however, was now fuller, richer, and its tones were further enhanced by an accent of melancholy, which, in certain of the prolonged notes gave it a wailing sound, as if it expressed the hopeless feeling of a broken heart.

The young priest involuntarily cast his eyes up to the choir in the end gallery, just as the hymn was closing, and saw the eyes of Agnes Warden, the soprano, fixed on him, with an expression of rapt devotion in them. It disturbed him, and brought a flood of memories to his brain and the blood to his face. He realized that if he gave way to his emotion he could not perform his office in celebrating the mass without betraying an unseemly feeling. This he was bound should not occur, and, though deeply stirred, by a supreme effort of the will he became master of himself, and when the hymn closed, he ascended the steps of the altar, and after the usual genuflection, turned toward the congregation, and resolutely keeping his eyes away from the choir gallery,

uttered, in a full, musical voice the "*Dominus vobiscum*," of mass ceremony. The response of the choir, "*Et cum spiritu tuo*" ("The Lord be with you." Response, "and with thy spirit.") The grand soprano voice seemed endowed with new inspiration in this, as in the other responses of the choir, throughout the mass; but the young priest, though he felt thrilled by the devotion embodied in the tones of that voice, now appeared to draw inspiration from it rather than disturbance. It seemed to say to him, by a kind of magic influence, "my love shall aid you in your holy office of worship and sacrifice! It will lift up your heart — not pull it down to the gross things of the world!" and he felt a new strength and new courage as he proceeded with the celebration of the mass, which in his hands was almost a revelation to the people who had been accustomed to the ministrations of Father Mc Mahon, with his unmusical and grunting voice, and ungraceful manner. The old priest noted the contrast as well as his congregation, and could not conceal a look of chagrin, which, however, few noticed, the general attention being so absorbed by the new priest.

At the close of the mass the young priest removed the chasuble, or outer garment, and turning to the congregation, prepared to give them a sermon — a thing they were usually greeted with by Father Mc Mahon only about three times a year.

He stood in front of the altar — there being no pulpit in the church — with his right hand raised, and his head thrown back. In this position he remained for about half a minute, silent and immovable. Then he said:

‘Dear friends of my youth, and congregation of God’s

church—It is perhaps meet that I should say something to you on this my first celebration of holy mass. My remarks will, perhaps, be in the nature of a sermon, and they will be inspired by the contemplation of the life of Jesus, and his promise of immortality, and a place with him in paradise—heaven—on the day of his death.

‘The text is to be found in the 42d and 43d verses of the 23d chapter of St. Luke. While on the cross, one of the thieves reviled the Saviour, but the other rebuked him, and said unto Jesus, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” And Jesus said unto him, “Verily, I say unto you, today thou shalt be with me in paradise.”

‘Now, in this, Jesus illustrated two vital things—vital to erring humanity. One was that true repentance is never too late; and the other—and this is of the highest importance—that there is a hereafter, an immortality, and a place wherein that immortality is passed. From this it can be seen that immortality is not the mere idea, arising from hope, which materialists say it is, but a natural thing to those who believe God’s promise, made through his only begotten son to mankind.

‘The heaven he promises us, therefore, is not the mere figment of the imagination, but an actuality as real as this life is. The question now naturally arises, how shall we pass the eternity of happiness in heaven? Will it be in idleness? No. Simply in praising God, by mouth exercise? Manifestly no. The eternity of existence cannot be of idleness and continual praise, but must be one of effort. Of what kind? God, who is perfect and self-sustaining, needs no service from us for his own

benefit. Who then shall we serve, and find occupation in doing so? Who, but one another! In other words, our happiness in heaven will consist in serving one another and making one another happy.

‘How shall we do this? By kind and generous deeds, by considerate and friendly treatment, by doing nothing that will offend, or make sad any living soul. As we do to them they will do to us. The happiness which we impart we also receive. We are just, and we receive justice; we are cheerful, and receive good cheer; we are loving, and receive love in return; we are considerate, and we receive consideration; we offend not, and we are not offended; we are hopeful, and we meet with hopefulness; we busy ourselves in serving those we come in contact with, and they in turn serve us; the word charity as with us is unknown, because all are on equality, all are equally sustained by God, and all act in unison in their good work and good will toward one another, by which they best praise his holy name.

‘What I desire to call your attention to is this, that as such conduct as I have here outlined is evidently that which can alone secure perfect happiness in the life to come, it is the one which should be adopted to secure the best enjoyment in this life. This is the mode of living which Christ taught, and you can see how logical it was, for the practice of it here simply fits us for the practice of it in the world to come.

‘To be sure, the harmony of such a life here is broken by the discord of passion, cruelty, selfishness, and the misery that results from them—things that need not and should not exist. But we can try to keep our own lives harmonious, and if there is discord, let it be by

some one else. We can try to love our enemies and do good to those who would injure us, which would be forgiveness of the most practical kind. Christ showed us by his life the model of living. His was, under the conditions in which he existed, the model life of a good man. He offended no man willingly, and did all the good that lay in his power. He was just, merciful and helpful. All these we can also be, and if we practised these virtues we should be not only happier ourselves, but would impart happiness to others.

‘In the holy city of Rome, which I left not long since, I saw abundant evidences of the badness of men and the dire consequences following such actions. There a band of unlawful men, with a fanatic at their head, drove the holy Father, our beloved Pope, Pius IX, out of the Holy City. But God interposed, and put it into the head of the ruler of the French people to restore him. It involved much and lamentable bloodshed, and the poor mistaken wretches who participated in the sacrilege were either killed or driven out, as wanderers and outcasts on the face of the earth.

‘If these people had not been moved by blind passion they would not have thought of committing such a sacrilege; but it only illustrates the terrible consequences of injustice, of transgression, of sin. God is slow to punish, but his vengeance when it does come is swift and sure.

‘I have said nothing about the eternity of misery which is evidently in store for the transgressor who is not repentant. God is merciful, and will forgive the worst sinner if he be repentant. If, however, he does not repent—if he does not walk in the way of righteousness; doing all the good he can and living a virtuous

and honest life, then the consequences are terrible. He is consigned to an existence where misery and discord are unending. I do not care to contemplate it. It is not a cheerful subject of thought, but it is necessary to point out to all who persistently transgress the inevitable consequences of such transgressions.

‘Now, a word about myself. I have chosen my path in life. It is one beset with cares and responsibilities, but it is also one in which I hope to be of service to my fellow men. This is my highest ambition, to serve God by serving my fellow-creatures, and striving to lighten their load of existence by kindness, sympathy, charity for the weak, and good will to all. It matters not to me who it is that needs my aid—he is a fellow-creature, the son of God and heir of eternity—he shall receive it.’

He paused, for he had finished. There had been nothing strained or dramatic in his tone or gestures during the delivery of this his first sermon. The voice was natural, though of course the inflection was somewhat high. There was a flush on his cheek, and a glow in his eye that seemed as if it had caught the light of inspiration, and when he resumed the concluding services the flush and glow had not faded, and his voice had an exultant, hopeful tone in it when he faced the congregation and pronounced the aspiration, ‘*Dominus vobiscum!*’ and there floated back from the choir (he could hear only the voice of Agnes) ‘*et cum spiritu tuo,*’ in the tones that said: ‘God bless you, my love! Go on, you are in the right!’ and a flush of gratification, softened by an unnameable sadness, swept through his whole being.

The congregation was dismissed in the usual way, and in company with Father McMahon, Cluney, Tom, and

his parents, Richard walked to the home of the latter, the parish priest and his nephew having been invited to the Gaston mansion to dinner on this particular day.

At the table, Richard very properly declined to say grace in deference to his senior, who invoked the blessing. After the meal was over, and the wine brought on, Mrs. Gaston retiring, the conversation naturally turned upon events of the day.

‘I liked your sermon,’ said Father McMahon to Richard. ‘It was simple, direct, and’ — with a meaning look at Tom — ‘very much to the point.’

Tom saw the point of the latter remark, and said:

‘The soul, or rather the body of the sermon was good. It was pure ethical religion, and was so broad and liberal and logical that it was a surprise to me. I never heard such sentiments given out from a Catholic altar before. The general idea of heaven entertained by all the Catholics I have ever talked with is that heaven is a place where there is nothing to do but play on harps and sing praises. The idea of an eternity of effort is good, and that such effort is to be expended in mutual works for mutual happiness — why that is excellent. Is it sound Catholic doctrine, Father Tom?’

‘It is,’ replied the priest, ‘without any doubt. There is nothing that is good and noble in the ideas of right and good that is not Catholic.’

‘I must say, Dick,’ pursued Tom, addressing the young priest, ‘that I like your idea that if doing good to one another were the employment of people in the hereafter, it was the true method of conduct in this life. This I regard to be the basis of all true religion on earth, even without reference to the hereafter.’

‘Then,’ queried Cluney, ‘you do think that religion is not out of place in this life?’

‘Religion,’ said Tom, ‘is all right, when stripped of the tinsel and glitter which now dims its true lustre. Dick has, consciously or unconsciously, struck at the fundamental principle of all true religion — the ethical or moral one embodied in the precept, “Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you.” This, alone, is basis enough to stand on.’

‘But is it enough?’ asked Cluney.

‘I do not see wherein it is lacking. If you mean that the supernatural is needed, I see no objection, if every one was allowed to create his own ghosts. But when the ghostly principle is put in as an article of faith, to be subscribed to, I think it is wrong, as well as superfluous.’

‘Why don’t you start a religion of your own, Tom,’ asked the priest, sarcastically.

‘I think I could improve on the old ones in the way of pure ethical practices, though as regards the business part of it, I think they could give me many points.’

‘Give us an idea of what your church would be,’ said Cluney.

‘I will do it,’ said Tom, ‘for, to tell the truth, I have been thinking seriously of starting a new religion.’

When the good-natured laugh, which this naive declaration evoked from all present — the wine was beginning to mellow the souls of even the godly — had subsided, Tom continued:

‘To begin with, I recognize certain tendencies in man which the laws condemn and the churches frown at. One is to games of chance, games of pastime, and other things which are in themselves harmless if pursued under

right conditions. For example, there is card playing. It is an innocent pastime, and, under proper regulations, not bad to pursue. But if you drive it out of the home, and the church condemns it, then it goes into places where it is employed for gambling, to fleece and cheat the unwary.

‘Again, there is dancing. Some of the churches condemn it. Properly regulated, it is exhilarating and thoroughly enjoyable.’

‘The Catholic church does not condemn dancing,’ remarked Father Tom, ‘except at certain times.’

‘I am not speaking of the Catholic or any other church in particular,’ said Tom, ‘but of the Christian attitude in general towards such things. I mention these things which are now frowned upon by the church, but which flourish — sometimes under bad influences — against their interdict. And why do they persist? Simply because in them people find an amusement, a pastime, to vary the monotony of life.

‘What are our churches? They are used only for one purpose, that of worship. They are, as it were, the portals of eternity, where fate, with stern and terrible aspect, confronts us, and reminds us that we are worms, life a hollow mockery, and that the only true motto of our lives is “memento mori.”

‘Now my idea is to tear down the old church edifices, and build habitable places, where the people of each parish could meet on common ground for mutual instruction and mutual enjoyment. I would have lectures, discussions, social meetings, places where card and domino playing, billiard playing, dancing assemblies, gymnastic exercises, and all other kinds of amusements

that could be pursued in doors would be carried on under good influences.'

'What would you do with the priest?' asked Cluney.

'I would make him the active leader in all the good work. I would have this modern church open every day and night in the year, and would make it so attractive that there would be no need of the young people going elsewhere for any legitimate amusement they might desire. In this way the pastimes, which are now often objectionable because of the conditions under which they exist, could be regulated to proper moderation, and given a tone of sanction and respectability that would make them legitimate and therefore more highly enjoyable. This would be the kind of a church that would have some true merit and right vitality to it. It would knit us closer together in our lives, for, after all, ties of friendship and even of relationship are really based upon association; and, therefore, when a church congregation can be made as one family, by intimate and pleasant association, the ties of fraternity can be extended and made of vast utility in the promotion of general harmony and brotherly love.'

'Upon my word, Tom,' said Cluney, 'there is much merit in what you say; very much, indeed.'

'That is true,' added Father Tom, 'and there is nothing in it contrary to the teachings of the church.'

'Then why does not the church pursue the work practically; for, so far as I can judge, it rarely if ever gets farther than the theory? Tolerating pastimes is not promoting them.'

'The work of reconstruction must be a slow one,' observed Cluney. 'You understand that the church has

all along had to contend with social and inherited conditions which are not readily amenable to modification.'

'I do not understand it,' said Tom. 'I rather regard the church as the active agent into producing most of the conditions you speak of. But perhaps it is well not to pursue this line farther. One thing I will say, and that is, that I am glad to find that Richard's sermon was so little doctrinal, and was so purely ethical, except in one respect, when he condemned the action of the Italian patriots.'

'You saw some of the desolation wrought by them in Rome,' said Richard. 'How do you justify such acts, especially as they were directed against the benign rule of so good a prelate as the Holy Father?'

'War,' said Tom, 'is revolting, terrible, but bad as it is, it is often justifiable. While it lasts, which is usually but a short time, it entails more or less destruction of life and property. But what are such sacrifices compared with the prolonged agony which despotism imposes upon its victims. Personally the Pope may be a good and charitable man, but we have abundant evidence that his government was at best but a mild despotism.

'Look at the condition of the people of Italy, descendants of that noble race, who were once masters of the world. A foreign king rules, with despotic sway, in Naples. The Italian peninsula, where the ancient glory of the republic and the empire was centered, is in the control of the church, supported by bayonets. A portion of the northwestern kingdom has become a province of the Austrian empire, and only one small section of the kingdom — Sardinia — is in the hands of a native Italian prince.

‘Let us put ourselves in the place of the people whom Garibaldi and Mazzini represent in Italy. Every act of the oppressed against the oppressor is in the nature of an expression of *désespoir*, wrung from them by centuries of wrong and of denial of manhood. Look at Ireland, which has been for ages under the heel of the stronger element in Great Britain—do you condemn its patriotic sons for regarding every opportunity to break their fetters as one that should be gladly availed of? Are the patriots of Ireland right in rebelling against the domination of a foreign power, and Italian patriots wrong in doing the same thing?’

‘The two cases are not analogous,’ interrupted Cluney.

‘If there is any lack in the analogy,’ returned Tom, ‘it is in favor of the Italians. While the Irish had been more or less oppressed, they have had at least a show of representation in the law-making of the kingdom. It is true that a class of the people more than the people of Ireland is represented in the British parliament. But, in Italy, the country has been cut up into small despotisms, and the people have been practically without representation. Their condition as a people is little better than that of serfdom. The Irish, bad as their condition may be, are free men compared with the Italians of the Papal States, the Neapolitan kingdom—in fact, of all the sections outside of the little Sardinian kingdom. If I were an Italian, I would be not only an active conspirator, but would devote my whole life, as Mazzini and Garibaldi have done, to the promotion and success of insurrectionary enterprises, until the entire people would rise in revolution and possess themselves of the birthright which

had been stolen from their fathers. There is a spirit abroad in Italy, I feel confident, which will never slumber, until freedom and unity are secured for that historic land. And I glory in the fact that in Italy today

“Thoughts have gone forth,
Whose powers can sleep no more.”

‘Would you depose the Holy Father?’ asked Father Tom.

‘Most assuredly. Let him attend to the affairs of his spiritual kingdom, and allow secularists to attend to secular affairs. Why should you, because you are a priest, have a right to govern this town or this province? The Pope could still have his headquarters at Rome, and carry on his church government there as well as now.’

‘Well, well,’ said Cluney, ‘let us change the subject. You are at least consistent and honest about your ideas, Tom; and we cannot evidently agree with you in everything. When do you propose to return to Boston?’

‘In about a week. I deferred beginning a general practice until I could remain there permanently; for I feel somewhat in my profession as Dick does in his. I want to do all the good, in my way, to poor, suffering humanity that I can.’

‘That reminds me, Tom. Our friend, James Warden, has been failing in health greatly in the past six months,’ said the elder Gaston, who had heretofore taken no part in the conversation. ‘Do you think you could help him in any way?’

‘I doubt it, father. His case is a peculiar one, I should say — what is commonly known as a breakdown. It is mainly psychological — that is, the spirit of the man

seems to be broken, and, though he appears to be an ordinarily sound and healthy man, he has evidently surrendered his hopefulness; and, what with the worry and loss of sleep incident to such a condition of mind, together with his peculiar physiological constitution, there need be no surprise if he should at any time be visited with apoplexy, paralysis, and—well, there is no telling what might occur to him at any time.’

‘That is not a favorable diagnosis, Tom,’ said Mr. Gaston, ‘but I fear you are right. His condition, also, cannot be greatly improved by the bad state of his affairs. I fear he is not over and above solvent, and his business seems to be growing worse every day. What do you say to calling on him tomorrow, Tom, and asking him some questions about his health?’

‘That is needless, father, for the reason that I have already seen and talked with him, and Agnes has told me much that I know about him.’

CHAPTER XVI.

THE STRANGE DISCOVERY — SICKNESS AND ABERRATION — MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF RICHARD.

Since his return home, Richard Gaston had not felt as he anticipated that he would. He had pictured Agnes as being distant, and perhaps not friendly in her bearing towards him. On the contrary, however, he found her not only friendly, but cordial. He saw in her eyes the fire of the old love, and thought what a fool he had been

to be so precipitate in the matter of becoming a priest. Still he had no idea of the true state of affairs.

On the evening of the Sunday on which he preached the sermon which was given in the last chapter, Agnes came over to his father's house, and contributed to the enjoyment of the evening. She was bright, cheerful and witty — more so than he had ever known her to be before.

That night, on retiring, he said to himself, and kept repeating it — 'What a fool! What a fool!'

On Monday evening, after supper, when Tom and his father were engrossed in the discussion of matters and things in Europe, as seen by the former on his visit, Richard left the house and wandered down to the seaside, the old trysting-place seeming to have a fascination for him. He went a little way beyond it, and sat down to watch the rising moon.

'Dear old moon,' he said, 'I have seen you elsewhere, in many climes, but nowhere just as I see you here; for here you are so familiar and homelike that I feel most intimate with you, and could even shout and laugh at you, as I did when a little fellow, who knew nothing about you or the troubles of the world.'

The moon kept on its upward path, apparently, and Richard's reveries continued; but were interrupted by the sound of voices near at hand. He listened.

'This,' said the voice of a young man — 'is the place they met and talked of love. Why can't we?'

'I would rather not,' said a female voice. 'It is, I fear, an unlucky place. They did not marry, and he became a priest.'

'Yes,' was the reply, 'but it was his own fault. He

would not wait. Old Warden afterwards relented, and told Mr. Gaston that his son could have Agnes. But Dick had gone to Rome, and when his brother followed him and tried to prevent his becoming a priest, he found he had already been ordained. So you see it was his own fault.'

'I hear Agnes took it very much to heart,' said the female voice, 'but she does not show it. She is too proud to, I suppose. But, come away! There is something uncanny to me in this place.'

Richard heard this conversation, like one in a dream. Was it possible that what he heard was true? He was dazed at the revelation. It explained everything to him, and when he fully realized it, his head was in a whirl. He hastened home and sought his mother.

'Mother,' he asked, 'is it true?' And then he told her what he had heard.

'Oh, Richard! Where did you hear that?'

He told her, and asked almost wildly: 'Is it true, mother; is it true?'

'God help me,' said the mother, 'and God help you to bear it, my son!'

'Then it is true?'

'It is. But'—

She could say no more; for he had risen, thrown up his arms wildly, like a man who had been shot, and then fell down on the floor—limp, and apparently lifeless.

'It is lucky that I am at home,' said Tom Gaston, after reaching his brother's side, whither the shrieks of his mother had summoned him.

'Let me see. Yes—why what has happened? The boy has all the symptoms of brain fever. Do you think

the excitement of yesterday had an unfavorable influence on his mind?’

Then his mother explained what had occurred.

‘Confound the tattlers,’ he said. ‘How did it leak out? But we must attend to him at once; for, in his present mental condition, this shock may unbalance him.’

Tom then proceeded to do all that his art could suggest for the sufferer, and even called in one of the most reputable of the town doctors to aid him in the treatment.

The young man was delirious for many days, and his ravings were all about Agnes — Agnes, his love! — Agnes, his life! Tom suggested that the young woman be brought to his bedside, as her presence might have a tendency to quiet him. This the doctor agreed to, and Agnes was sent for, and came. When she realized what had occurred, she felt as if she, too, would be a victim of brain excitement; but a strong will restrained her from giving way; and, perhaps, also, a sense of duty, for she realized that in her presence and ministration might be involved the safety of the young man. So with her the crisis was brief, and she came off triumphant.

Agnes helped to nurse the young priest — alternating with the mother — for several weeks, during his slow recovery.

At length one day — it was in the afternoon — Richard awoke to a consciousness of his surroundings. He had recovered his reason.

He found himself in bed, with Agnes seated by its side, and his hand in hers. He tried to rise, but, much to his surprise, fell back exhausted from the attempt. Agnes,

perceiving that his reason had returned, quickly relinquished his hand, and blushed scarlet.

‘What is it, Agnes?’ asked Richard. ‘Have I been sick? Was it all a dream or a nightmare? We’ve had no trouble, have we, dear? I did not go to be a priest, and was not ordained, then? I see how it is—some sickness I have had. And, yet, all was so natural that—Say it wasn’t true, Agnes,—that it was only a dream—and I will bless you!’

Agnes was weeping. What could she say, except what she did say:

‘Richard, you are too weak to talk, and the doctor has ordered me not to say anything to you.’

‘I care not what the doctor says, Agnes! Have I not been sick?’

‘Yes, very sick, of brain fever.’

‘For how long?’

‘About two or three weeks. Now, that will do. Take this draught, and compose yourself.’

He did as directed, and soon fell into a quiet slumber.

Agnes looked at the young man, who should have been her partner for life, snatched from her by a cruel fate, and held in fetters by the church—fetters that could never be broken! It was terrible!

She knew that, though the church held him, he still loved her. The whole burden of his ravings during his sickness was of her and of his love for her. In his delirium he imagined that he had married her, built a house for her reception, and began a life of domesticity with her.

Then a cloud would come up—a remembrance that there was a claim on him—the claim of the church.

But he would deny the claim and defy the church. Then he would imagine he was being taken to a dungeon, to be chained—chained by the heart to a living death! It was pitiable to behold him in these paroxysms of fever; but Agnes bore it, like one apparently fascinated by the terrible fate of which she and the sufferer were the victims.

When Richard slept, Agnes quietly left the room to carry the glad tidings of his restoration to reason. His brother Tom had just returned from a walk, and when told of the fact, advised that his mother now watch him and be present when he awakened, and that it would hardly be advisable for Agnes to go in again unless he called for her.

‘Now, Agnes,’ he said, ‘you will have an opportunity of getting some rest, and take it, for you need it badly.’

Agnes followed his directions, for she sadly needed sleep, having had but little in the past three weeks, and Mrs. Gaston took her place at the bedside.

Richard’s recovery was rapid. In two weeks from the time he became conscious he was able to go abroad. His brother had returned to Boston a week before, and matters in the Gaston household began to settle down to a normal condition of monotony.

With Richard there was not a revival of cheerfulness with the return to health. Without being notably morose, he was yet peculiarly silent, and seemed thoughtful and brooding. He took long walks alone, and was often absent a whole day. He appeared to take little interest in anything.

His mother, more than once, detected him at the side-board, helping himself to the strong French brandy,

which was kept there more for certain visitors than for home use. At first she thought nothing of this—and indeed was rather glad of it, for she believed it might stimulate him to cheerfulness and robust health. But when the habit was persisted in, and the potations became more frequent, she grew alarmed. Mr. Gaston one day commented on the rapid way in which the French brandy was disappearing, and questioned his wife about the matter. She told him of Richard's growing taste for it, and how uneasy it made her; but she refrained from saying anything, in the hope that when the young man had fully regained his strength, and began to occupy his mind, he would abandon it.

‘Dear me,’ said Mr. Gaston. ‘How stupid of me not to think of it before, and tell you. Before leaving, among other things, Tom said to me that he hoped Richard would not become melancholy and take to drinking. However,’ he said, cheerfully, ‘it is not too late yet. I will talk with him this very evening—and you might make an excuse to leave the room to allow me the opportunity.’

What of Agnes? it may be queried. She was not often seen now at the Gaston mansion, and indeed she had all she could attend to at home. Her father was not in good health, and there was much about his business that required looking after, which absorbed most of her time. She had seen but little of Richard since his convalescence. Indeed there was a kind of mutual shyness between the young people, which neither seemed to care to analyze. When Agnes did see Richard, it was in the presence of one or both of his parents. She studiously avoided meeting him alone,

and she now rarely went out for a solitary walk, her mother or a servant being generally with her. On such occasions, if Richard was encountered—which was sometimes the case—he usually passed by with a bow, though once or twice he paused to greet her civilly, and ask after her father's health.

One evening Richard was late to supper, and when he did appear his face was flushed. He had little to say, and no excuse to offer for his prolonged absence. When he came into the sitting room, Mr. Gaston gave his wife a signal, and she made an excuse to leave the room.

‘How are you feeling in health, Richard?’ asked the father.

‘I am well and hearty, sir.’

‘What do you propose doing?’ asked Mr. Gaston. ‘I suppose you have your plans for the future?’

‘I have nothing definite in view. I did think of writing to the bishop, and asking for the vacancy in the Vignish parish, which Father McPhee has lately left, on account of ill health. But it is a wild region, and the people are not half civilized. Do you know, father, that I have half a notion to go to the States, on a short tour? I think it would do me good. Then I will come back, and face my duty like a man.’

‘I will not seek to combat that resolution, Richard; but, really, I think you would do much better to settle down at once to the business of the life you have chosen.’

Then, in a delicate way, he introduced the subject of the growing habit of drinking ardent spirits, which the young man appeared to be developing.

‘Liquor,’ he said, ‘is a good thing in its place — as a

medicine, perhaps. But when taken regularly it loses that virtue, and when the habit of drinking is once established, it is sure to lead to excess.'

Richard replied that he was aware of the truth of what his father said, and would forthwith abandon the use of it; but he still showed a disposition to go abroad for a short time, and asked his father for a loan of fifty pounds, to enable him to make the journey. This Mr. Gaston declined to promise at that time, though he said he would think the matter over, and give him an answer later.

For about a week after this interview, the parents of the young man noticed with satisfaction that he had discontinued his visits to the sideboard, and was beginning to be more cheerful and talkative. When Mrs. Gaston heard of her son's desire to go to the States she was opposed to it, but he pleaded with her so strongly that she at length consented to aid him in the project, if his father was willing. She had some money in her own right, and could easily give him all he would need for a journey of a few weeks.

Matters were in this condition of uncertainty for two weeks longer, when Richard announced that he had abandoned his contemplated trip to the States, and would apply to the bishop for the vacant parish of Vignish.

He went to see his friends, Father Tom and Cluney, about the matter, and the former at once gave him a letter to the bishop, to accompany Richard's application. This was duly forwarded by Richard, who, however, did not send with it his own application, as afterward appeared.

On the way homeward, that day, the young priest encountered Agnes, alone, on the street, and stopped to talk with her pleasantly. He seemed to be in good humor, and excellent spirits, and told her he was about to make application for the Vignish parish. In parting, he took her hand, an unusual thing for him to do, and held it in his for nearly a minute. Then he bade her good-bye 'till we meet again.'

She thought his action a little strange at the time, but did not attach any special significance to it, as he was smiling pleasantly, and seemed to act half playfully—just as he was wont to do at times when they were lovers.

He returned to his home early that evening, and retired to his room, where he was engaged in writing until quite late.

On the morning following, Richard not appearing at the breakfast table, a servant was sent to his room to call him. She returned and reported that no response to her calls and rapping on the door had been made.

Mr. Gaston went up to investigate, and found the room empty. He thought nothing of it at the time, and returned to the breakfast room, saying that no doubt Richard had gone out for a walk before breakfast, and would soon return.

Just as they finished breakfast, however, the servant who had been sent up to call Richard came in, and said she had just come from his room, and that the bed had not been slept in!

'It is curious,' said Mr. Gaston, 'that I did not notice that,' and he and his wife went up at once to the bedroom.

Sure enough, the bed had not been slept in, and, looking on the table, a note was found, in pencil. It said:

‘DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER: I shall be absent for a time—I can’t say how long. Don’t be uneasy about me.
RICHARD.’

In the fireplace was noted the burnt remains of paper, as if letters and other writings had been destroyed. A large valise, some clothing, shirts and underwear were missing from the room, and indicated that the young man had really started on a journey of some kind. But where could he have gone?

Mr. Gaston lost no time in instituting a quick search and inquiry in every direction, but without obtaining any tidings of the fugitive, who seemed to have disappeared as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up.

Only one clue to a possible mode of departure was obtained, and that was the sailing of the brig *Enterprise*, bound for Philadelphia, and a market, on the morning of Richard’s disappearance.

The captain of this brig was known, and was written to, and the letter would probably be in Philadelphia awaiting his arrival. Tom was also notified of his brother’s disappearance, told of the sailing of the *Enterprise*, and asked if he could not see the captain, and find out if Richard had taken passage in her. The letter arrived in Boston during a short absence; but when Thomas Gaston returned and found it, he set out for Philadelphia, where he arrived too late to intercept the brig, which had been ordered to the West Indies. He thought he would go to the post office and inquire for a letter for Capt. Macdonald, and found one there awaiting that person, on which he recognized the handwriting of

his father. With a sad heart, he wrote to his father the result of his mission to and investigation at Philadelphia, and then returned to his office in Boston.

The weeks lengthened into months, and winter came and passed away—the long and dreary winter of the eastern British provinces—and not a word or trace of the missing young priest was realized by his stricken parents. The father bore up under the strain, finding, no doubt, in his business affairs enough of occupation to divert him from brooding over his family troubles. His wife, however, took the matter very much to heart, and her only consolation was the frequent visits of Agnes Warden, who was equally heart-stricken at the disappearance of the young priest. But it was a kind of consolation to both to meet and talk about the absent one. And this talk was always more or less hopeful, for both agreed in the firm belief that he was alive and would yet return.

In the first week in June, 1853, the brig *Enterprise*, Capt. Roderick Macdonald, cast anchor in Chebucto harbor. When he ascertained the identity of the new-comer, Mr. Gaston hastened down to the wharf, opposite which the brig had anchored, and as he reached the landing slip, the stalwart form of the brig's captain was seen mounting the wharf, and the merchant's hand was the first he clasped when he got onto the wharf.

Of course the first question asked him by Mr. Gaston was about Richard, and the captain said that on the morning of his departure from Chebucto—it was an early start, for he had to take advantage of the tide—the young man had come aboard from the wharf, and asked to be taken to Philadelphia. The captain said he

thought it a rather singular step for the young man to take, for he knew he ought to afford to go by steamer, but as Richard said it was for his health, he thought perhaps it might be all right, and made the young man welcome.

On arrival in Philadelphia, however, Richard revealed to him the fact that he had left home without any money, but said he wanted to visit some places in the States, and would then make his way home. He asked the captain for a loan, which the latter said he readily gave him, though it left him rather short for funds. But he did not want the young man cast loose in a strange place without money, and advanced him what he needed, for which Richard gave him an order on his father for the amount loaned, and price of his passage to Philadelphia. The order ran as follows:

‘PHILADELPHIA, October 10, 1852.

‘MR. RICHARD GASTON, Chebueto:

‘Dear Father—Please pay to Capt. Macdonald, for loan of money and passage to this place, three hundred dollars, or its equivalent in your currency, and oblige your son,

‘RICHARD GASTON.’

‘P. S.—Capt. Macdonald has been most kind and generous to me. I am in good health, and may not return home for two or three years. Do not be anxious about me. Love to dear mother and all friends.

‘RICHARD.’

Mr. Gaston thanked Capt. Macdonald for his kindness to Richard, and invited him to call at his counting room on the day following, when he would pay the loan, and wished to have a talk with him. The merchant then went home to his wife, and acquainted her with the facts

of the departure of Richard. The mother was greatly cheered by the news.

‘Thank God!’ she fervently ejaculated. ‘He will yet come back, and all will be well. I shall go at once and tell Agnes of it.’

On the following day Capt. Macdonald waited on merchant Gaston, who received him cordially, and after paying him the money due by Richard, with interest, he drew the captain to the window, and calling his attention to a new ship, nearly completed and ready to launch, said to him :

‘That is a fine ship, captain. I will launch her at the next high tides. She is the largest and best ship I have ever built, and I am going to own her and keep her in trade. I shall call her the ‘Agnes Warden,’ after my old friend’s daughter, but I have told no one but you of her name as yet. In two months she will be ready for sea. I have been looking about for a capable man to command her, and have decided on one, and therefore ask your advice in regard to the matter. What would you say to Capt. Roderick Macdonald as a commander of such a ship?’

The young seaman — he was about thirty-one years of age — was so taken by surprise at this question that for a moment he could not answer. Then he faltered out :

‘Do you mean this, Mr. Gaston?’

‘To be sure I do, and I have not decided without thought. I have watched your career as a ship-master, and know that you are smart, capable, and faithful. Now, I want just such a man to command that ship. Besides, your friendly act towards my poor boy has laid me under a debt of gratitude to you; and you shall have

the command of the 'Agnes Warden.' I shall double your present salary, and, as soon as you can leave your present employ, your pay as captain of the ship will commence. I shall give you work until the ship is ready for sea in superintending the rigging and other details of her equipment.'

Captain Macdonald thanked Mr. Gaston heartily for the position offered him, which he gladly accepted.

CHAPTER XVII.

CALIFORNIA MINING CAMP—GAMBLER'S VICTIM—A LUCKY FIND, AND SUCCESS—RETURN HOME.

It was in December, 1852, at a mining camp in Placer county, California, on the American river, that a stranger arrived late in the afternoon. The name of the camp, which was a small one, located not far from Michigan Bluff, we may say was 'Rough and Ready.' The stranger went at once to a bar-room, where he proceeded to regale himself with a drink of brandy, which he took with evident relish. He was young—not over twenty-five—and good looking, but did not appear like a man who had ever roughed it. But this was nothing new in the diggings, as great numbers of such men flocked there all the time, so that his advent and appearance excited little or no comment from the few loungers in the bar-room. While the young man is regaling himself with a second glass of liquor, let us briefly outline the mining situation in California at that time.

Gold had been discovered four years before this time, and the rush of people from all parts to the placers on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada range of mountains was simply immense. For the first three or four years, the mining was done mainly by the pan and rocker. The pan used by the placer miners was commonly made of ordinary sheet iron, with a flat bottom about twelve inches in diameter, and sides six inches high, inclining outwards at an angle of about fifty degrees.

The gold was usually found in a tough clay mixed with sand and gravel. The miner filled his pan with this clay, went to the bank of the stream or river, filled the pan and shook it, using a stone to break up the lumpy clay, until it was dissolved. Then he kept repeating the washing until the clay was dissolved and run off into the river as he tilted the pan, the gold settling at the bottom in the operation. The coarse particles of sand and pebbles that would not go off with the water were removed by hand. These manipulations were repeated until the gold was practically freed from all other material, when it was recovered. When panning was in vogue, the outfit of a miner, besides his 'grub' or food, consisted of only a pick, shovel, pan, and a blanket.

After a time, when the returns from this process ceased to yield gold according to expectation, the rocker took its place. The rocker was made somewhat like an old-fashioned child's cradle, but open at one end, that is, without a foot-board. The upper end, however, was considerably higher than the lower, and contained a large colander-like riddle of sheet iron, with holes punched in

the bottom. The floor of the rocker was set with cleats or riffles, extending nearly across, to catch the gold. The miner filled the riddle with pay-dirt, and rocked the rocker with one hand, while he poured water on the dirt in the riddle with the other. The water and the motion dissolved the clay and carried it down to the floor of the rocker, where the cleats caught the gold, while the mud and water ran off. The riddle was attached, so that it could be taken off to throw out the stones. As one man could not work to advantage in this process, two men usually associated together and divided results; one mining the pay-dirt, while the other worked the rocker.

Our new arrival still sat and drank in the bar-room, until darkness came on. By this time the miners began to congregate, and card-playing and other games of chance became quite general. The principal interest, however, appeared to be centered on one card table, where one of the miners, with a professional gambler for an opponent, was having a run of luck, and to this place the new-comer was attracted.

After a time, however, the miner began to lose, and in a little while the last of his gold went to the gambler. A dispute between the latter and the loser had already commenced, and the result of the game brought it to a climax, when the miner accused him of cheating. The gambler quietly asked him to 'take that back,' as it was not true. This only incensed the miner still more who made threats of 'getting even' with him. Upon this the gambler drew a revolver from his hip pocket, and shot the miner. The latter fell. He was not killed outright, but felt that his time was short. He was in great agony, and cried—

‘O, if I only had the consolations of religion, I could then meet my Maker with some hope. If there were only a priest here’ —

The stranger came forward and said:

‘I am a priest, and will do what I can to prepare you for death.’

He then directed all to withdraw to one side of the room, while he administered the last rites of the Roman Catholic church to the dying man, shortly after which the latter breathed his last. His partner and some others of the miners took charge of the body, and buried it early on the following morning; then they went in a body to the gambling den, and, taking the murderer by surprise, riddled him with bullets. Then there was another funeral.

These were curious scenes to the young priest, and he half determined to leave the place, and would have done so, if he had the means; but, as a matter of fact, he had spent to within a few dollars all his money, and was forced to do something.

The partner of the dead miner, who was known as Jim Smith, after the second murder and burial, approached the new-comer, who had acted as a priest, and said to him:

‘Parson, what might I call your name?’

‘I call myself here Richard Warburton.’

‘Did you come to these diggings to work — to dig gold?’

‘Yes; that is what I came for.’

‘Well, parson, you did so handsomely by poor Bill Johnson, my pard, that I come to offer you his place with me. We have a rocker, picks, shovels and pans,

and have been doing fairly — some days taking out an ounce, and some less, according to how we strike it.'

'My friend,' said Warburton, 'your offer suits me exactly, and I will accept it with thanks. I am not used to rough work, but I am strong, and can soon accustom myself to it.'

It was settled at once, and without delay the young priest took the place of the miner whom he had shrived on his departure from life.

For a few days the work seemed very hard to the young man, but after a while he became accustomed to it, and the new firm was doing fairly well in the way of taking out gold from the river bank gravel; but, after all it was slow work, and the necessities of life were high, but not higher than liquor and the love of gaming, both of which were shared in equally by the partners — that is, Richard drank more liquor than he should have done, but would not gamble; while Jim Smith's chief passion was gambling — and he lost the most gold.

In this manner month succeeded month, and the time lengthened into years, with little progress made by these associated miners. They had fair luck in getting out gold from the river bed, and generally worked hard and steadily, but spent about all they made, one at the gaming table, and the other at the bar.

It was in June, 1854, and just one year and a half from the time that Richard Warburton had known his first mining experience in the Rough and Ready mining camp.

One evening, when Smith was more unlucky than usual, and Warburton had taken more brandy than was his custom — though with him the habit had grown

steadily—his partner came over to him and said—
‘Parson, I’ve had the worst kind of luck—lost every pennyweight I had in the world. Won’t you lend me a few ounces, and see if I can’t change my luck?’

‘Jim Smith,’ replied Warburton, ‘I would lend you the last pennyweight of gold I had, if I was not assured you would throw it away. Can’t you see, man, that the chances are all against you? Come, take a drink, and we will talk matters over.’

‘Look-a-here, parson; do you think its any worse for me to throw my money away in gambling than in drink? If I lose at a game at night, I’m able to go to work in the morning. If I spend it in brandy, I’m not usually fit for work next day. You know that you have lost two days lately, because you were too sick to go to work in the moring after drinking too much over night.’

‘That’s true, Jim, quite true; but what if I tell you that in the two days I’ve been up the gulch I have made a great discovery, which promises to make both of us rich?’

‘What have you struck, parson?’ asked Jim, who at once became deeply interested.

‘Take a glass of brandy, and then promise me that you will gamble no more until we have worked out the new claim, which I have discovered,’ said Warburton.

‘I’ll do it, on one condition, parson. If I must stop gambling, you must stop drinking. Is it a bargain?’

‘It is,’ answered Warburton. ‘After to-night, and until the claim is worked out, I promise that I will not drink a glass of liquor of any kind, unless I need it for medicine.’

‘Then it’s a go, parson. Now tell us about it.’

‘Not here,’ was the reply. ‘Come to the camp,’ and both the partners left the saloon for their sleeping tent. Arrived there, Warburton said—

‘Now, Jim, let me ask, in the first place, if you have any idea of how this free gold came into the river bottoms?’

‘I suppose it was always there, but the river has uncovered it.’

‘Not so, my friend. I have studied geology enough to know that gold was originally deposited in veins or lodes, and, as these were broken down or disrupted by the water forcing a passage through them, the rocks moved by the water were, in time, and by the action of the current and other disintegrating influences, broken up and pulverized. Now, it seems to me that in the ancient river beds is to be found the most gold, for in those beds the waters ran most rapidly, and the action on the rocks carrying gold was stronger and the result better. Well, now, where are those old river beds? We must look for them higher up than the present river beds, which have washed down through and in many places across them, leaving sections of those old river beds here and there along these rivers.’

‘That sounds like good sense, parson; but where are the old river beds you speak of? If we could only find one, we could test it.’

‘I have found one—found it the last day I was away. It is only about two miles up the gulch. I examined it; found the bed-rock of the old river; worked into the tough clay overlaying it with my knife blade, and, after about two hours of labor, got out enough of the gravel to make a good panful. Well, I put it in my handkerchief,

carried it back to camp, and this evening panned it out. How much gold do you think I got from that panful of dirt?’

‘Well, perhaps a pennyweight,’ replied Jim.

‘I got fully five pennyweights.’

‘Great Caesar! Is that true, parson?’

‘It undoubtedly is.’

‘And is there much of the gravel there, parson?’

‘A vast amount; but whether it is all as rich as that panful is something I very much doubt. As gold is a heavy metal and sinks to the bottom, I think we shall find the richest dirt next to the bed-rock.’

‘Parson,’ said Jim, ‘you’re right, and I think you’ve made a rich strike. How far is it from water?’

‘It is about one hundred and fifty feet above the river; but then the carrying of the pay dirt will be down hill, and we can easily carry it on our backs in bags, after we have picked it out.’

Next morning, bright and early, the two miners, after a hasty meal, pulled up stakes and started up stream, with their tent, mining and cooking utensils, and a small amount of ‘grub’ or provisions on their backs. It was a rough way to tramp so heavily loaded; but in the course of about two hours they arrived there, and, after pitching their tent and arranging it, and making other preparations for camping, the miners erected their rocker. By this time it was nearly noon, and they concluded to eat something before making a trial of the new diggings.

Two bags full of material were taken from the bed-rock of the ancient river at the place where Warburton had obtained his panful. They were run through the rocker; but the clay in the material was so tough that it

was found very difficult to wash it, and Jim began to grumble at the length of time it took 'to bring butter.' But when it was effected, and the bottom of the rocker cleaned out, an exclamation of delight escaped him.

'By the Lord God, parson,' he said, 'we've struck it rich! Why there's fully an ounce here in the pan! Parson, give me your hand. Our everlasting fortune is made! I can see it, as plain as the nose on your face!'

Well, it turned out just as Jim said. The miners drove a drift or tunnel in on the bed rock, and were fortunate in running into a depression or pocket in the worn bed rock, where they found much gold, among which occurred a number of good-sized nuggets, one of which weighed over three ounces. In less than three months the partnership of Smith and Warburton had taken out over ten thousand dollars worth of gold!

When tidings of the great find reached the old camp, it was quickly removed to the new diggings, and the hill where the gold was discovered was rapidly becoming as if a lot of gophers had attacked it. Every miner was making money more rapidly than ever before, and Warburton was accorded the full credit of the discovery, the camp having been named after him — 'Parson's Luck.'

'Well, parson,' said Jim, as they sat smoking one fine evening in September, after work, 'it seems to me that we have nearly worked out our claim. It has been a lucky one for us, for we have now nearly five hundred ounces of gold. Just think of it, pard, we have about five thousand dollars apiece. And I owe it to you, pard, in two ways. First, you discovered this claim, and next you broke me of gambling.'

‘Well, if you are under obligations to me for that, I am under a deeper debt to you for holding me to the compact to keep from drinking. So, you see, we owe much to one another.’

‘Now what would you advise, parson?’ asked Jim. ‘Shall we look for a new prospect, or put our money into the new waterworks, where they are going to ditch the water and wash out these old river beds on a large scale? You know they are doing this on nearly all the rivers, and are already at work above us on the American.’

As a matter of fact, hydraulic mining had already been quite generally adopted in California, but on nothing like the scale on which it was prosecuted a few years later, when the original ‘Tom, or trough’ succeeded the rocker, and was in turn superseded by the ‘sluice’ and ‘grizzley,’ and later by the ‘giant’ water-thrower, now familiar to all.

‘Jim,’ replied Warburton, ‘you can do as you please. As for me, I’ve had enough of a miner’s life to last me while I live. I am going to let well enough alone, and start for my home in the East. I have not written a line to my people since I left home two years ago, and I suppose they think me dead. I will surprise them.’

‘I reckon you will, parson; and that reminds me that I have friends in the South—in Kentucky—that I ought to go and see. A wife, too, who thinks me dead; and two sons. They must be—let me see—yes, Jim’s ten, and Buckner’s about eight years. Fact is, pard, me and my wife didn’t hitch well; so I pulled up stakes, left her the farm and stock, and lighted out to California in ’49. Yes, pard; you’re going to do the right thing,

and I'll follow suit. I reckon, after all, they'll be mighty glad to see me.'

So it was settled that when they had exhausted the claim, which occurred within a week, they would pull up stakes and leave the diggings. They traded their rocker, camping outfit and mining tools for a horse, and bought another; and then, on a morning in September, started on their journey to Sacramento. Here they sold the horses, and took passage in a steamer for San Francisco—'Frisco it was called, for brevity.

Arrived at San Francisco, the partners proceeded to the United States mint, where their gold was weighed, and a receipt given for it. A hundred dollars was advanced them, and they were told to call on the following day, after the assay was made, when they would get paid in full for it. They left the mint, and walked down Market street to the water front, along which they strayed.

'There's a fine ship, parson, and she seems to be making ready to start,' said Jim, as they came to one of the wharves. 'Let us go down and see her off.'

They walked down the wharf, and had nearly reached the ship, when Warburton stopped shortly, and gasped for breath.

'Hello, parson!' exclaimed Jim, catching hold of him, as he staggered, 'what's up? Sick, eh?'

Richard had seen on the stern of that ship a name that brought a flood of memories into his mind, which nearly overwhelmed him. The name was—

'AGNES WARDEN, CHEBUCTO.'

It looked as if they were about to cast off, and, without replying to Jim's question, Warburton rushed forward

and hailed, with a frantic haste and a manner which at once commanded attention :

‘Hold on, there ! Where’s the captain ?’

‘Here I am,’ replied the man addressed. ‘What do you want ? Speak quickly. We are about to cast off.’

‘Capt. Roderick, don’t you know me ?’ asked Warburton.

But he was sunburnt, and had grown a beard, so it was not to be wondered at that the captain replied —

‘No ; I don’t know you. What do you want ? Be quick !’

‘Capt. Macdonald, if you do not know me, I must make myself known — I am Richard Gaston !’

‘Good God ! Is it possible !’ Then turning to his men, he gave rapid orders to lower the jib sails already hoisted ; to not cast off from the wharf, and then jumped ashore to assure himself of the truth of what he had heard. He was quickly convinced that it was indeed Richard Gaston, and soon had him and his partner on board, and was listening to the story of his experiences since leaving the brig Enterprise, in Philadelphia.

‘This is your father’s ship,’ he said, ‘and named by him, and I have reason to believe that I command her principally because I befriended you before.’

‘Are father and mother well ?’ asked Richard.

‘When I last heard from them they were, but I have been away now over six months. Been to India, China, and have run across here with a small cargo, expecting a freight ; but have got but little. I will call at Honolulu, where I may pick up some oil from whalers for New Bedford, and will then call at Pernambuco, where we are always sure of plenty of hides for Boston.’

‘Any other news from home?’ asked Richard.

‘Yes,’ replied the captain, with evident reluctance. ‘James Warden died about a year ago, leaving his affairs in a bad condition. Your father was appointed administrator, and did the best he could to settle up the estate. He thought there would be but little left for the wife and Miss Agnes. When I sailed it was rumored that Mrs. Warden and her daughter were going to Boston to live.’

‘A pause ensued, when wondering Jim Smith broke in with: ‘Well, parson—so your name is Gaston and not Warburton, and this is your father’s ship? I always knew you were the son of some rich man, who had left home for adventure, and not because you were forced to. Well, I’m glad I discovered this ship in time. I suppose you’ll go home in her?’

‘That is just the question I was about to ask,’ remarked Capt. Macdonald. ‘Of course you can get home quicker by way of the Isthmus; but, if you are not too impatient, you can make a good voyage with us, for the ship is a good sailer, and it would be a smart clipper ship indeed that would show her its heels.’

‘I’ll think it over,’ said Richard. ‘In the meantime I’ll write a letter to father and mother, and another to Tom, to acquaint them of my return, which I will mail, if I go with you. If not, I will not mail them.’ Turning to Jim, he asked: ‘Mr. Smith, if I should decide to go in this ship, will you accompany me?’

‘I’ll go whichever way you go, parson,’ was the reply.

‘Am I at liberty to invite this friend as my guest, if I go with you?’ asked Richard of the captain.

‘Your friend will be heartily welcome, and will receive the best of usage from me,’ replied Capt. Macdonald.

‘Thank you,’ said Richard.

‘And I join the parson in thanks,’ added Smith, ‘whether we go with you or not.’

On the following day the partners received their money from the mint—a little rising five thousand dollars each, and Richard, having decided to go home in his father’s ship, the money and baggage of himself and partner were transferred to her, and in the afternoon she had passed through the Golden Gate, and was well out to sea, under a good breeze and with all sails set.

‘I think we shall have a good time rounding the Cape,’ remarked Capt. Macdonald, ‘for the line gales will be over before we reach there, and the weather will be as fine as it ever is in that rough place.’

CHAPTER XVIII.

NEWS FROM RICHARD—THE WARDENS AND GASTONS IN BOSTON—THE PRODIGAL’S RETURN.

It was in Chebucto, late in October, 1854. Richard Gaston had returned to his home in the late evening—that is, later than usual—tired and hungry. His supper was waiting him, and he ate it with a relish, saying but little. At its close, and when they were seated in the sitting room, he said to Mrs. Gaston:

‘I have been working so hard, trying to settle up James Warden’s affairs—which, thank Heaven, I have

nearly wound up — that I did not even look at the letters that came in the mail — there are several.'

'Will Agnes and her mother have much left, Richard?' the wife asked.

'Very little. Not over one thousand pounds, if they have that.'

He did not say that if he should exact the repayment of the loan which he made to James Warden, there would be nothing left; but such was the fact.

'That is too bad,' said Mrs. Gaston. 'What will they do in Boston with that amount of money? It will keep them there but a short time.'

Mr. Gaston took a letter from the pile before him, and was reading it.

'Why,' he said, 'here is a letter which answers your question exactly. It is from Tom. He says he has taken a house at the West End, and Agnes and her mother are going to run it. He will have apartments, and thinks he can fill it with students from the Medical College, who need such accommodation; and he can do this, as he is now connected with the college as instructor.'

'Well, that is good, and kind in Tom, too. He has a good heart' —

'Why, great heavens, wife! Here is a letter from — who do you suppose?'

'Richard,' she replied, jumping from her chair.

'You have guessed it, Margaret. The letter is dated "San Francisco, Cal., Sept. 12," and is addressed to "Dear Father and Mother." Let me see — He says he has just returned from the gold mines, where he has been for over a year and a half, and has about five

thousand dollars in gold as the result of his work (more than he would make as a priest in ten years at Vignish), and—hello! here is another surprise—he has discovered the Agnes Warden in San Francisco, and has concluded he will come home in her. Well, wife, dear, what do you say to this? Isn't this good news?'

'It is! It is! My poor boy—God bless him! Coming home! And he has done so well, too. Well—well. How curiously our lives are ordered.'

'How curiously we order them ourselves, dear. But, no matter. He is coming home, and if he would only consent to let the priestly business alone, and begin with me again, it would be a great benefit to me as well as to him, for my business was never so flourishing as it is to-day.

'I doubt if he will,' said Mrs. Gaston.

'And why not? If he could work in the mines, why not with me. The property will all go to him and Tom when we die. Why should he not then be interested in increasing it?'

'O, I wish Agnes were here now,' said Mrs. Gaston. 'You don't know how I miss her. I would like to tell her the news of Richard's safety, and his return home.'

'I guess she knows it already, for Dick writes me that he has also written to Tom in Boston.'

* * * * *

A substantial brick house on a quiet street in the West End of Boston bore the sign 'Thomas Gaston, M.D., Physician and Surgeon,' on its front. On the door-plate the name 'Warden' appeared.

It was in October, the same month as the events just narrated took place in, but a week before that time,

Dr. Gaston returned to his home in the afternoon, and was met at the door by Agnes Warden, with words of welcome. She had not changed greatly in the past two years, except that her face had an air of melancholy, which now seemed habitual to it.

‘I saw you coming,’ she said, ‘and I so hoped that you would have a letter from home, that I thought I would intercept you. But I suppose it’s disappointment again.’

‘So far as the letter from home is concerned,’ said Dr. Gaston, ‘I fear it is. But I have a greater surprise for you than a letter from home would be. I received a letter today from California—from whom, do you suppose?’

‘I suppose,’ said Agnes, flushing up, ‘it may be from Richard.’

‘You have hit it. Come into my office, and I will tell you its contents.’

‘This letter,’ continued the doctor, after Agnes and he were seated in his office, ‘is dated at San Francisco, September 12. It tells of Dick’s experiences in the mines, and that he came out with the intention of returning home, when he accidentally saw the ship ‘Agnes Warden,’ and is coming to Boston in her.’

‘How long should it take the vessel to get here?’ asked Agnes, with an eagerness which she was quickly ashamed of.

‘That depends. If she would come direct, she should be here some time late in December. If she has to call anywhere for a freight, she may be later.’

‘Does Richard say anything of his intentions for the future—that is, as to what he will do?’ asked Agnes.

‘No. He has saved about five thousand dollars during

his year and a half at the mines, and can live without a parish, for a time, if indeed he ever takes one.'

'Why do you say, "if he ever takes one?" Is there any doubt about it?'

'Well, he says here: "I am not as yet quite settled as to what I shall do in the future. I have lost all relish for the priestly office—not because I do not believe in it, but that I feel I am not fitted for it. However, time and events will have to decide." So you perceive that he is still at sea in the matter of a profession, as well as literally. I wish he would throw up the clerical business for good and all, and settle down to some useful occupation. Dick has a good business head, father tells me, and, if he would only go home with the old man and help him in his business, I think he would soon forget his wild escapades of the past four or five years.'

'That could hardly be,' observed Agnes. 'At least it would not do for him to go into business in Chebucto. The people there would think it altogether improper for a priest to leave the altar and go into trade. He might do that here, but not there.'

'I suppose you are right, Agnes,' said the doctor, 'though, hang me if it would have any weight with me. However, we shall see what he will do when he gets home. I know of but one thing that I think would make him settle down, if anything would.'

'And what is that?' asked Agnes.

'To get married.'

'Oh, you don't mean that, Tom,' said Agnes, her face aflame. 'That would be impossible. A priest can never marry.'

'The laws of Massachusetts do not forbid it,' he replied.

‘But the laws of the church forbid it,’ said Agnes. ‘Is not that sufficient?’

‘Hang the church! What is it, and its laws of celibacy, as against a man’s happiness? I would fling them to the winds, and be happy in spite of them,’ said the doctor. ‘There is nothing morally wrong in marrying; while there is wrong in not marrying, if it would make one happy, while to remain single entails misery.’

‘But would his parents consent? Think of the shock it would be to his mother, and what a scandal they would have to endure in consequence. It would not do, Tom,—it would not do.’

‘Agnes,’ said the doctor, bluntly, ‘let me ask you a question: If father and mother were willing, and your mother did not oppose it, would you make any real objection to marrying Richard?’

‘O, Tom,’ she said, hiding her face in her hands, ‘that is a curious question you ask me.’

‘Well, Agnes,’ he replied, ‘it is a pertinent one, at least; and you needn’t answer it now, but think it over.’

Agnes left the office, as if in perturbed thought.

* * * * *

In the early part of November, the members of the Warden-Gaston household, at the West End in Boston, were treated to a kind of double surprise. Agnes Warden had just got a letter from Mrs. Gaston, and Dr. Gaston had received one from his father. That of Mrs. Gaston to Agnes said:

‘I have been so lonesome, dear, since you and your mother left Chebucto, that I fear I am getting dull and melancholy. So I have persuaded father to try and fix up his affairs, so that things would go on all right, and take me to Boston, where we could stay until the spring,

and where I could have some company. So, my dear, please make room for us in your boarding house, and expect us on within a week or two.'

Dr. Gaston's letter, from his father, went on to say :

'Your mother has been dull and moping of late, and seeing that she needed congenial company to enliven her, I have consented to go with her to Boston to spend the winter.

'I have arranged my business affairs in such a way that I can leave this place for a time. I am doing no shipbuilding—indeed, I doubt if I shall ever build another ship—and all that will be done in my absence will be store business. My head clerk is a faithful man, honest and trustworthy, and I have given him full charge of the business during my absence; and, knowing that liberality on the part of an employer is usually an incentive to faithfulness in the servant, I have increased his wages, and feel that he sees that it is for his best interest to look after my business as carefully and zealously as if I were at the helm myself.

'Another reason impels me to go to Boston. My advices from Capt. Macdonald lead me to expect that he will arrive in Boston some time in January next. With him is Richard, whom your mother is all the time thinking and talking about. His going away so suddenly and unceremoniously leads me to think he would not care to return to Chebucto, where his pride would be apt to receive a shock at every curious look and gossiping whisper he might see or hear. So you see I am mainly impelled to leave my business out of consideration to your mother and in connection with Richard's return. We shall see him in Boston, and take measures to have him settle down to some occupation in life—not that of a priest, I hope.'

'There,' said Dr. Gaston, as he finished reading his father's letter to Agnes—she having read his mother's to him—'father has hit the nail on the head. Dick was

never cut out for a priest, and would better abandon that calling as a profession. I know his pride may revolt against it at first, but I believe his love is stronger than his pride.'

'But would not his conscience'—

'Agnes,' said the doctor, 'conscience is a curious and very elastic condition of the moral nature. It will stand an enormous strain upon occasion, and may be warranted never to break. A man who is honorable will not usually do a dishonorable act. But in all matters where a doubt may exist, I think you will find him inclined to give himself the benefit of it. I know Dick has a good deal of the superstitious Irish nature of our mother in him, but I also believe he has a good deal of hard Gaston sense. I am satisfied that he has now a great dislike to the priesthood, for he sees in it the only barrier that exists to his happiness.'

'But does he love me sufficiently to make such a sacrifice?' asked Agnes, doubtingly.

For answer, Dr. Gaston arose, went over to his secretary, and, opening a private drawer, took out a folded paper, indorsed, 'Richard to Agnes,' and handed it to her, explaining how it came into his possession.

'This,' he said, 'was written at a time, no doubt, when he was in the act of committing moral suicide. It is the cry of despair of a man who was about to immolate himself against the protests of his heart and of his better nature. -Read it, Agnes.'

She did read it, and while doing so she was a study to the keen-eyed doctor, who watched her closely, while appearing to look another way. As Agnes read on, her bosom heaved, and the roses and lilies waved alternately

along her cheeks, fanned by the varying emotions within, and when she had finished reading it, the tears were flowing freely from her eyes; seeing which, the doctor delicately withdrew, as if something demanded his attention in another room.

He was absent about ten minutes, and when he returned Agnes had dried her tears and was outwardly calm. She handed the manuscript back to the doctor, without remark, and rose to leave the office; but he waved a refusal, saying:

‘No, Agnes; the verses are yours, and you only should have the custody of them.’

She stood irresolute, for a minute, not knowing what to say or do; then, folding up the paper, she put it in her bosom, and silently left the office.

‘I’m not much of a plotter,’ reflected the doctor, after the young woman had disappeared; ‘but I think I have made a clever attempt, in this instance, to aid love in overcoming artificial barriers — powerful ones, no doubt, to those who believe in their sacredness and potency, but to me would be as mere cobwebs, which I would brush aside with a feather. I can see that Agnes would need but little persuasion to be induced to marry Richard; and he, in his turn, might in a moment decide to break the fetters which bind him, and become a man, who owns himself and holds allegiance to no superior. He has the will to do this, and the courage, if he would not be deterred by his superstitious nature. -

‘He thinks, poor fellow, that he is religious, when he is simply superstitious. The Catholic religion is no doubt a venerable and respectable epitome of old-time superstition; and the Protestant so-called evangelical

religions — what are they, after all, but varied forms of the same superstition? Catholic and Protestant religions alike: They are simply the embodiment of the dreams of ignorance into tangible creeds or intangible doctrines. They claim arbitrary dominion over our destiny; often lead us a life of misery and apprehension, yet holding out the promise of compensation, in a world that has no known existence, for what we suffer here.

‘They tell us of the spiritual world, and how superior it is to the material. What is the spiritual world, in fact, but the world or condition of the mind which is recognized as a mental abstraction — that state of intellectual consciousness and mental activity where the mind revels, fancy free, in the realms of imagination? Here the silly and uninformed mind indulges in fancies which are often as absurd and grotesque as those of dreams are apt to be; and if that mind belong to a preacher, and it leads him to the wildest extravagance, he thinks it is inspiration, and will continue his nonsense and rant until it becomes a mental disease with him. Then he communicates his disease to those who come under his influence, for mental and moral contagion is as certain as that of the common infectious diseases of humanity. Hence we have religious revivals, spiritual seances and outcroppings of various mental phenomena, all of which are properly traceable to perversion of the imaginative faculties of the brain. Happy the man who is well enough grounded in philosophy and common sense not to be carried away by such nonsense. But — well, humanity is an enigma, and life a paradox.’

* * * * *

As announced, in less than a week from the time the

letters were received by Agnes and Dr. Gaston, the parents of the latter arrived in Boston, and were most cordially and heartily welcomed at the West End mansion, where a large front room on the second floor had been reserved for them, and furnished with special reference to Mrs. Gaston's taste, which Agnes was quite familiar with.

Mrs. Gaston was especially pleased to see Agnes. 'You have no idea, Agnes,' she said, 'how I missed you and your mother, and how lonesome it was to me when you left. Well, I hope we shall enjoy one another's society during the coming winter.'

'I know we shall,' returned Agnes. 'Nothing could suit me better than to have you with us, and I know we shall all be pleased.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Gaston, 'and when Richard comes home our family circle will be complete.'

Agnes blushed so deeply that she was fain to turn her head and look out of the window, to hide her face from observation.

Whether it was the new and pleasant associations connected with the advent of the elder Gastons, or some of the potency which hope instills into loving hearts, it would be difficult to say; but, as a matter of fact, Agnes Warden became a changed woman. The roses of health bloomed on her cheeks. There was a rich sparkle in her deep blue eyes, like the scintillations of the sapphire. Her step became elastic, and her whole bearing buoyant. She smiled habitually, and her laugh, though soft and musical, was cheerfulness itself, compared with what it had been of late.

In fact, Agnes Warden seemed to have at once ripened

into lovely womanhood. She was a beautiful woman — with few equals.

‘Father,’ said Dr. Gaston, one day, when the elder Gaston was alone with him in his office, ‘what are we going to do with Dick, when he comes home?’

‘That is a thing I have thought about frequently. One thing I am convinced of, and that is that he is not fit to be a priest. He does not like the profession.’

‘I agree with you. Now, in my opinion, he will never do anything until he is anchored to some domestic condition. To be plain, until he marries.’

‘I suppose you are right; but how is that to be, when the church has already a life claim on him. If it were not for that’ —

‘Father, would that circumstance deter you from sanctioning his marriage — which is not against the civil law — especially when you know that by such a step he would not only settle down in life, but would become a happy man; whereas, as it is at present, he can not settle down and is not and cannot be happy?’

‘That is a question which involves more serious consequences, Tom, than you perhaps take into account.’

‘I think not, father. I know what you mean, and have thought it all over.’

‘But would Agnes marry him? Would she brave the scandal, the social ostracism that it would entail? Would her mother consent to it? I doubt if she would.’

‘Father, I am convinced that the only way to save Richard is to have him marry. I have told Agnes this, and have broached the idea of marriage to her. At first she saw no possibility of it, but I soon convinced her that it could take place legitimately. She has never said she

would marry Dick, but I know that if the consent of the other parties were given she would yield, for she loves him with all the strength of a strong woman's nature. Now, father, I want to ask, would you be willing to brave the seeming odium of such a consummation ?'

'Would I? Why not? I have not many years to live, at the most. To see my sons well settled in the world is my greatest ambition now. I feel the force of what you say. I believe, with you, that marriage only will cure Richard, and make him settle down. But'—

'Now, father, hold on. With your consent, much as it might mortify her at first, I think mother would be won over; for I know she loves Dick so well that she would make any sacrifice for him.'

'I think your mother might be brought to consent, though it would be a terrible trial for her. Then, there would be Mrs. Warden.'

'If she saw that mother and you would not object, I think she could be induced to consent.'

'Well, Tom,' said Mr. Gaston, 'I will think it over and talk with your mother about it. Perhaps it is as well to have the matter settled before Dick comes home.'

'That is just what I desire you to do, and it was for that purpose that I have introduced the subject at this time.'

Richard Gaston, a few days later, at a favorable opportunity, broached the subject of their son Richard's future to his wife.

'You know, Margaret,' he said, 'that the boy has no taste for the priesthood. He was never cut out for the church.'

‘I am sorry to say that that appears to be the fact. And yet,’ she added, ‘he might become reconciled to it in time. He has ability, and might rise in the profession—become a bishop. You know that there never was such a sermon preached in Chebucto as the one which he delivered. Every one praised it, and all deplored his sickness and disappearance.’

‘That may all be, Margaret; but you know what it was that brought on his sickness—the discovery that he could have married Agnes, when it was too late to do it. Do you think that he will ever change in his love for her? Never. And while such a condition of mind continues, can he be a priest? Is he fit to be one?’

‘But what can he do, if he does not continue as a priest?’ asked Mrs. Gaston. ‘If he goes into trade, is he any more fit for business, for the same reason?’

‘There is a way out of it, if he would take the step,’ said Mr. Gaston. ‘He could marry; and that would settle him down and make a happy and contented man of him.’

‘Marry! My God, Richard, what are you saying! A priest marry! Why such a thing would entail a curse upon him and upon all his family!’

‘Hold on, my dear. Before coming to such a conclusion, consider the circumstances under which the boy acted, and how much we are to blame in the matter. You always wanted him to be a priest, and he never favored the idea until he was disappointed in love. I hold myself equally to blame in not setting my face squarely against the boy’s rash resolve. Now, we are both agreed that he is not cut out for a priest, and we do know that he would be happy as a married man. Can

we not make some sacrifices for his happiness?' asked the father, in an earnest manner.

'I would give my life to make him happy!' she cried.

'Spoken like a loving mother, Margaret. Now all that I can suggest is that you yield a portion of your pride. That is all the sacrifice that is called for.'

'But how about Agnes and her mother?' asked Mrs. Gaston, 'They would never consent.'

'Agnes loves Richard as strongly as he loves her. Her happiness would be secured as well as his. Her mother would, I think, be ready to make a sacrifice for her happiness as noble as that of his mother. Well, dear,' he said, rising to go out for a walk, 'I leave you to consider the matter. I know you will give it your best thought.' And Richard Gaston wisely forbore pressing the subject farther that time; and even made up his mind not to renew it until his wife saw fit to bring it up again.

But the more he considered the subject, the more strongly he became convinced of the wisdom of the course suggested by the doctor. It would, to be sure, involve much scandal at his home in Chebucto, a thing he shrank from encountering, knowing, as he did, the unreasoning prejudices of the general run of Catholic people in such cases. But, if it would make Richard and Agnes happy—and he believed it would—he was prepared to encounter the odium attaching to such an act. He said to the doctor, that evening:

'Tom, I have spoken to your mother about the matter of Richard marrying.'

'Of course she was horrified at the idea of such a thing,' said the doctor.

‘Yes; and at first I thought she would never consent to it, but I appealed to her mother’s love, and I could see that she wavered. She will come around. But what do you think about Mrs. Warden giving her consent?’

‘If mother is won over, Mrs. Warden will readily yield—of that you may be sure. She is not so set as mother is; but would hardly give her consent if mother refused hers. It is all right, father. Say nothing more, but let them settle the matter among themselves. They will discuss it, and we shall hear the result, in due time.’

* * * * *

‘You seem disturbed, mother,’ said Agnes as she met Mrs. Gaston after the interview with her husband. ‘I hope you’ve heard no bad news. What has happened?’

‘No, my dear, not bad news from abroad. The trouble is here. I will say nothing about it, however, until I see your mother. Where is she?’

Agnes, with a quick woman’s wit, at once divined what had happened, and led the way to her mother, retiring when she had ushered Mrs. Gaston into the room where she was.

What passed between the two mothers at that interview need not be given in detail. The thing which they most dreaded, strangely enough, they yet desired the most, viz: the union of their children, because they saw in it the only prospect of happiness for both in this world. But what of the next? If it were a deadly sin for a priest to marry, would they not share in it by consenting to the sacrilegious act? The alternative was a terrible one to contemplate. Should they peril their souls for the sake of even their children, who, though

they might be made miserable here by keeping asunder, might reap eternal glory in consequence of the sacrifice?

Thus they discussed the matter, pro and con, and it seemed too much indeed for their poor weak natures to decide upon. On the one hand was the strong, natural love which a mother bears for her offspring — and there is nothing stronger and more sacred in the whole category of human sentiment than the unselfish mother's love. On the other was the awful spectre of the church, with one threatening hand pointing upward and the other downward, indicating, 'glory, or perdition, which?' Its voice enjoined the sacrifice on the part of its disciples: 'You shall forsake parents, and wife and children, and follow me!'

Few persons outside the Catholic church can appreciate the appalling significance of the question presented to these believing, loving women. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that as they discussed the subject they wept, and dried their tears, and still wept again. Neither should it create surprise that they could not arrive at any definite conclusion.

And thus matters remained for a week, Mrs. Gaston saying that she thought it would perhaps be best to bring her husband into the conference, while Mrs. Warden favored consulting a priest. At the end of the week Mrs. Gaston said to her husband:

'Richard, Mrs. Warden and I have been talking over that matter of a priest marrying, and can come to no determination about it. She thought that we would better consult a priest, while I held that it was best to acquaint you with our condition of mind on the subject.'

She then related to her husband the substance of the

conversation which she had had with Mrs. Warden, and the tribulation in consequence.

‘My dear,’ said Mr. Gaston, ‘you did right in opposing the calling in of a priest. You can see that, while it would be a delicate thing for a priest to decide on, his duty to his church would not allow him to do otherwise than strongly advise against it.’

‘What shall we do, then? Will you come in and talk the matter over with us?’

‘Yes; and I would suggest that we take Tom into our counsel,’ replied Mr. Gaston.

‘O husband, you know what an unbeliever Tom is. Would it be right to have him with us in the discussion of this matter?’

‘My dear, Tom has a clear head, and more hard sense than all of us put together. The very fact that he is an unbeliever better fits him, in my estimation, to look at this matter in a common-sense light than if he were a believer.’

‘Well, perhaps you are right, Richard. Let us arrange to talk the matter over to-night; and I will prepare Mrs. Warden for it.’

The arrangement was accordingly made, and on the same evening Dr. Gaston was called in. There was, of course, much talk, but it need not be repeated. Finally the doctor, after hearing the discussion, said:

‘I’ll tell you the way the thing looks to me, and in this light I think it is very simple. You believe the church to be paramount; that it can do and undo. But, if there is a God, he is undoubtedly above the church, which is his creature or agent. Now, this God you hold to be just and good, not cruel. He, you believe, holds

the lives and destinies of the humblest of His creatures dear to him. Not a sparrow falls, but He takes note of it. Now, is it not fair to suppose that such a God is as reasonable and as charitable as a good man would be? Then, show me the good man who would say, with a full knowledge of the circumstances attending this case, that these two loving hearts would be doing wrong by following the dictates of their nature, and uniting their destinies? And, if they were not wrong in thus seeking a union, would we be held responsible for aiding and abetting them in accomplishing their desire? I will say no more.'

But what he said was sufficient. It carried conviction to willing hearts. Mrs. Gaston broke the silence, saying: 'Tom, you have presented this matter in a new light. The God who judges our hearts will not, I am sure, condemn us for sanctioning what our hearts approve. I am, therefore, ready to risk the responsibility.'

'In the new light,' said Mrs. Warden, 'I see the thing differently, and I, too, will take the risk of sanctioning what my heart prompts me to consent to. It may be hard to bear, at first; but the hope that it will secure the happiness of our children is sufficient for me.'

'Dear mother, and dear Mrs. Warden, I honor you both for your courage and your affection. I think you have done more good by your decision than you could do in any other way in so short a time.' And then the doctor left the room with his father. The latter said, after they had reached the doctor's office:

'Tom, that was a masterly argument of yours — short, and to the point. It was, under the circumstances, irresistible. Now we want Dick to come on the scene.'

'He will appear in due time. In the meantime, we

must keep up the stamina of the ladies. Agnes will not object; of that I am convinced.'

* * * * *

It was near the latter part of January, 1855, when the Agnes Warden sailed majestically into Boston harbor, with more or less of ice on her bows and bulwarks, but with all well on board. Dr. Gaston, who still kept up his connection with the press, had a ship-news man on the alert for some time to notify him of her arrival, and when he heard of it, he took a boat and boarded the ship in the stream. The first man he saw on deck was his brother.

'Dick, my dear brother, welcome back again!' and the brothers embraced warmly.

Richard introduced Capt. Macdonald and his 'pard,' Jim Smith, and both these gentlemen, with Richard, accompanied the doctor ashore, who took them to his West End home.

'Father and mother are with us,' said the doctor, as the carriage containing the four friends rolled rapidly through the street. This was a surprise to both Richard and the captain; 'and,' he added, 'so are Agnes and her mother.'

A light gleamed in Richard's eye at this announcement.

Arrived at the Warden mansion, the newcomers alighted, and there was a curious and affecting scene in the parlor, when Richard accompanied the doctor into the house. The father first embraced him, and then the mother threw herself upon his breast and laughed and wept, and acted extravagantly, as a mother like her might do under the circumstances.

‘My boy! My Dick! My curly-headed baby boy! He has come back to his old mother! God bless him! God bless my boy!’

The scene was so affecting that Jim Smith said, to himself, he’d be ‘dog-goned if he could stand it,’ and turned away to hide the tears that were coursing down his cheeks. Poor fellow! He was thinking of his own home and boys, and wondering what his reception would be.

Merchant Gaston grasped the hand of his faithful captain, in token of welcome, but could say nothing at the time.

When calm was restored to the scene of the meeting, Richard introduced his friend Smith, who received a cordial welcome; and then he looked around for some one he wanted to see, above all others perhaps. While his mother was talking with Smith and his father with Capt. Macdonald, Dr. Gaston beckoned to Richard, who followed him out of the room into his office.

‘Wait here a moment, Dick,’ he said, and rushed away. He soon returned, with Mrs. Warden. Richard greeted her with nearly the same affection as he did his mother, and she kissed and embraced him as if he were her son.

Then Richard instinctively looked towards the door, and there, standing in it — a living picture in such framing — was Agnes Warden, a dream of lovely womanhood. She was indeed a beautiful, mature woman, with the roses of health on her cheeks, and a love-light in her eyes which could not be mistaken.

Richard’s first impulse was to rush to her and take her in his arms; but he remembered that he was a priest — hateful profession — and stifled the impulse of his

heart. Agnes came forward in a frank and friendly manner, and, with more than a friendly warmth, said:

‘Dear Richard, we are all so glad to have you with us again that we do not know how to express our joy.’

‘Dear Agnes,’ he said, and his voice faltered, ‘I shall never leave home again.’

It was a curious reply; but the young man hardly knew what he was saying, though unconsciously he implied that the attraction of home was now beyond anything on earth to him, and was therefore binding. He was hopelessly enmeshed in the fetters of love. A curious condition for a Catholic priest to be in; but was it unnatural?

CHAPTER XIX.

RICHARD DECLARES HIS LOVE — AGNES CONSENTS — THE DOCTOR TO MARRY — VISIT OF BROTHER IGNATIUS.

For perhaps a week after his arrival in Boston, Richard Gaston did little but sit in the house in the company of his father and the ladies, and tell of his life in California. Jim Smith was with him much of the time, and his ‘that’s a fact, parson,’ frequently uttered, gave an emphasis to the young man’s narration.

But this half-dream-life had to end some time. Smith wanted to visit his family in Kentucky, and Richard arranged for the transfer of his gold by express—he would take nothing with him but the gold. So, one morning there was leave-taking, and Richard accom-

panied the honest miner to the railway station, and saw him on board the train.

‘Write me when you get home, Mr. Smith,’ he said, ‘and, if they don’t treat you well, come back again, and I think we will get something for you to do.’

‘I’ll write ye, parson, sure,’ he said, ‘and if you ever come to Bowling Green, don’t forget to call for Jim Smith. And, as for my folks, if they don’t treat me well, they’ll not get a picayune from me; and I’ll come clear back to Boston—see if I don’t.’ The train started, and waving his friend adieu—a good, true man, whom he parted with regretfully—Richard returned homeward.

He walked with his head bent forward, and so engrossed was he in his thought that he ran plump into a gentleman on the street, who was walking more slowly in the same direction.

‘Pardon me, sir,’ he said and was passing on, when the stranger stopped him.

‘I think,’ said the latter ‘that we have met before. Your name is Gaston, is it not?’

‘That is my name,’ replied Richard, ‘and now I recognize you as a tutor in the St. Sulpice College of Montreal. You are Brother Ignatius, if I mistake not.’

‘The same. Where are you stationed? You don’t look much like a priest.’

‘Well, I am not a priest with a parish, and doubt if I ever shall have one. I do not like the profession.’

Then he related his experience in California, gave Brother Ignatius his address, and went home.

That evening he sought the doctor, his brother, in the latter’s office.

‘Tom,’ he said, ‘I have been brooding over a subject, which I have heretofore hesitated to speak to you about, though there is no good reason why I should not.’

‘Go ahead, Dick. You shall have an interested listener in me.’

‘Well now, Tom, I hardly know how or where to begin. Curiously enough the accidental meeting with a Jesuit instructor of St. Sulpice College, at Montreal, has impelled me to seek your confidence in this matter.’

Then he told of the encounter with the stranger.

‘I was puzzling myself, just before I ran onto him,’ continued Richard, ‘as to how I would broach the subject to you. Now, in the first place, I have imbibed a strong dislike for the priesthood.’

‘I don’t wonder at it,’ replied the doctor. ‘It is not an enticing profession for a man of your taste.’

‘No; my taste is altogether secular, and — domestic,’ stammered the young priest.

‘I don’t blame you for being inclined that way,’ said the doctor, ‘considering the prospect before you.’

‘Ah,’ said Richard ‘there is the trouble. The prospect is bright in a way, but hopeless. The fact is, Tom, I have for the past two years brooded over the matter — over the position in which my unfortunate rashness has placed me. What can I do? Coming home in the ship, I fully concluded to do one thing, if it were possible, and that was’ —

‘To marry Agnes Warden,’ finished the doctor. ‘Isn’t that so. Yes? Well, allow me to congratulate you on your return to reason. I was thinking of that myself — not of marrying her, my boy, but of you doing that thing.’

‘But,’ pursued Richard, ‘I have no hopes of overcoming her scruples to marrying a priest, much less those of her mother and of our own parents.’

‘Never despair, Dick. Faint heart never won fair lady, you know. Now, suppose she would consent, and the others would not—what would you do?’

‘I would marry her, and then brave the consequences.’

‘Bravo, Dick! There shows out the old Gaston spirit. But what of the church?’

‘I should brave that, too. If Agnes would have me, I would risk the torments of hell to marry her!’

‘Now that’s the kind of talk that I like to hear. But, of course, you know what a scandal it would create. Think how the old people—those believing mothers—might take it to heart.’

‘I do think of it, and it distresses me more than I can express. But I must speak to Agnes, and get her to decide first. After that will come the serious part, as affecting the consent of the parents.’

‘Dick,’ said the doctor, ‘I have anticipated your change of mind on religious matters, and your desire to marry. I have tried to smooth the way for you, and I think have succeeded satisfactorily.’

Then he told Richard how he had squarely broached the subject, how it had been discussed, and how he won the victory. Richard jumped up, like one transported with joy.

‘Tom,’ he said, ‘you are the best fellow in the world. May heaven bless you forever for what you have done!’ and he started out to seek Agnes.

The doctor stopped him. ‘Do not go to her in that extravagant frame of mind, Dick,’ he said. ‘Wait here

a few minutes and compose yourself, and I will send her in to you.'

Sure enough, in less than ten minutes Agnes walked into the doctor's office, but was hardly inside the room before she found herself clasped in her lover's arms.

'Agnes,' he said, 'this is no time for apology, even if it were needed. We have both suffered enough to dispense with that or with prudery. You have ever had my love, and ever will. I cannot live without you. The church can be no barrier to such love as ours. We were married in our hearts before the church had any claim on me. Now, Agnes, I want you to give me a favorable answer.'

'Richard,' replied the young woman, 'I have always loved you, I love you better now, if possible, than ever before. I am prepared to face all the odium that may attach to the act of marrying a priest, and will marry you whenever you desire it.'

Then Dr. Gaston came in.

'I am glad to find you have arranged this matter,' he said, 'and I wish you joy. I feel that you have both chosen wisely. When the time arrives, I can bring in a justice of the peace—it will, of course, be a civil marriage—and he will tie the knot without circumlocution.'

Then Agnes escaped from the office, and went to her mother, to acquaint her with what had happened, and the doctor and Richard started on the same errand to their parents.

When Mrs. Gaston heard the announcement that it was definitely arranged that Richard and Agnes would unite in marriage, she burst into tears.

‘Are you sorry that we are to marry, mother?’ asked Richard.

‘Yes; I am sorry—and I am glad. And I do not know whether it is for sorrow or for joy that I weep. I think it is both.’

But the time that the marriage would take place had not been settled. Richard, of course, wanted it without delay; but the elders counseled delay for a week or two, at least, and this was acquiesced in.

A few days following the above events, Dr. Gaston came home to his dinner as usual, but seemed more than ordinarily preoccupied. At the close of the meal, when the servants had left the room, he said, abruptly:

‘I have a confession to make to all, and I suppose if I were not so hard-hearted, I would either laugh or cry—I know not which. I have received a letter announcing the fact that Dr. Vincent Gaston, of Rome, and his daughter Beatrice were on the eve of departure from the Holy City, bound for America—Boston, in fact. Beatrice is going to study medicine with me, as my wife. I can’t say whether I fell in love with her when I met her in Rome, or she with me. Anyhow we have maintained a correspondence since that time, and I have written to her that my mother was fond of daughters-in-law, and I guessed she would like her. So this is my confession.’

‘I can say this for your future wife, Tom, and I saw more of her than you did: She is a good, sensible, lovable woman, and would make a wife any man should be proud of,’ said Richard.

‘Thank you, Dick; that is my estimate of her,’ said the doctor.

‘Well, Tom,’ said his mother, ‘you are the coolest wooer I ever knew. But, Tom, does she know your peculiar views on religion? I presume she’s a Catholic?’

‘Nominally, yes — like her father. In reality, however, our views on religion substantially agree. Here is a photograph of her;’ and the doctor showed them the photograph of a beautiful young woman, with Italian features, which was passed around and admired.

‘I know you will like Dr. Gaston, father,’ said the doctor. ‘He is enough like you to be your brother. You can talk over family matters, and compare notes. He told me that the Gaston family boasted of many distinguished men, soldiers and prelates — the church militant and the church triumphant, I suppose. I wonder which branch we belong to, the fighters or the prayers?’

‘I shall be most happy to meet Dr. Gaston,’ said the father. ‘Does he speak English?’

‘Yes, and so does Beatrice. Now,’ pursued Tom, ‘they ought to be here inside of two weeks; and I have a proposition to make: It is that Richard and Agnes postpone their wedding until the Gastons come, and we can have a double wedding.’

‘That is a good idea,’ said Mrs. Gaston. ‘Are you agreed to it, my children?’ she asked, turning to Richard and Agnes.

‘We are,’ was the joint response.

‘But,’ continued Mrs. Gaston, ‘will not your intended want to be married by a priest, Tom?’

‘She will marry me as Agnes will marry Richard, according to the civil law. I shall marry in no other way.’

* * * * *

A visit from Brother Ignatius, S. J., to Richard Gaston.

The Brother called one evening when Dr. Gaston was in his office, and Richard with him. Richard welcomed him, and introduced him to the doctor. The latter suspected that, if the Brother learned later on of Richard's intended marriage, he might endeavor to shake his resolution regarding it. To forestall anything of that kind, the doctor, after some general conversation, said, abruptly:

‘By the way, Dick, you have not told Brother Ignatius of your intended marriage.’

Richard was confused for a moment at this blunt suggestion; but he rallied quickly, and said:

‘When I met the Brother the other day, the matter was not decided, and, until you mentioned it, I did not give it a thought. Yes; I expect to marry soon. I am not cut out for a priest, and I long for a domestic life?’

‘What!’ said Brother Ignatius; ‘you do not mean to tell me that you, a priest of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, contemplate a violation of your vow of chastity?’

‘That is precisely what I do contemplate,’ replied Richard, smiling, having fully recovered his coolness.

‘Well, I am astonished, sir. Do you know what the canons of the church say in regard to such violation?’ asked Ignatius.

‘Pray tell us what they say,’ broke in the doctor.

‘As it happens,’ said the Jesuit, ‘I have them about me, in Latin, but I can readily give you a translation of the exact language; and I think you should know what a risk you are about to take. The “canons of the Council

of Trent concerning orders," (canon 4) says: "Whoever shall say * * * that he who has once been a priest may again be a layman: let him be accursed." In the "canons of the Council of Trent concerning marriage," the 9th canon is as follows: "Whoever shall say that the clergy constituted in sacred order or regulars, who have solemnly professed chastity may contract marriage, and that the contract is valid, notwithstanding ecclesiastical law, or vow, and that to maintain the opposite is nothing else than to condemn marriage, and that all can contract marriage who do not think that they have the gift of chastity, even though they have vowed it: let him be accursed; as God does not deny this to those who seek it aright, nor does He suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear."

'This,' continued the Brother, in a severe and impressive tone, 'is the canon law of the Catholic church. Beware, young man, how you provoke the wrath of God by incurring the censure of his church!'

Richard was pale and silent, with his eyes cast down; and his brother watched him anxiously, to see how he would meet the prohibition of the church. At length Richard looked up, and when the doctor saw the settled purpose in that look, and in his face, he drew a breath of relief; for he wanted his brother to fight the battle on his own resources.

Richard, in a calm voice, and in eloquent language, gave the Brother a history of his life; told him of the impulse which drove him to study for the church; his hasty ordination, and later discovery of the fact that he could obtain the woman of his choice in marriage. He told of his sickness in consequence, and subsequent

desertion of home and kindred in an endeavor to forget the past, but without success. Finally he spoke of his resolve to marry as the only solution he could find of the misery he was suffering, which unfitted him for the priesthood.

It was an eloquent and pathetic relation of a singularly perverted life during the past five years. The Jesuit was a man, as well as a priest. He was visibly affected by the narration; but the zeal of his order, and his habit of self-abnegation, stifled the man in him, and he said:

‘While I deplore the circumstances which led you into the priesthood, Father Gaston, I cannot see how you are going to escape the consequences of the violation of your vow of chastity. The church did not allure you to its priesthood. You sought that of your own free will. You cannot, in honor, recede, and the church will not absolve you from your vow.’

‘Then,’ said Richard, ‘I will absolve myself.’

‘You mean,’ said Brother Ignatius, ‘that you will violate your sacred obligation. Well, if you are so determined, you will, of course, do it. The church will not seek to trouble you, or interfere with you in any way, but will leave it to God to deal with you.’

‘Then,’ said Richard, ‘I will look to God, who judges the heart, and who will be more considerate to me than the servants of His church seem inclined to be. I do not fear the issue. I will seek to live as happily as I can with the woman I love.’

‘I trust,’ said the Brother, ‘that your happiness here may not entail misery hereafter.’

‘My good sir,’ now spoke up the doctor, ‘will you

kindly tell me, in the first place, if you have any evidence of a hereafter; and, in the second place, what do you know of it?’

‘I will answer your questions, sir, briefly, and to the point. I have evidence enough of a hereafter to satisfy me; and what I know of it is derived from the highest authority on earth — the Roman Catholic church.’

‘That is well answered,’ returned the doctor, ‘and an answer of that kind might satisfy the general run of believers in your church’s infallibility; but, in the light of modern scientific thought, your answer is simply an evasion of the question. Of course there is little else to be expected from the priests of your church, or from those of any of the churches who take the Bible for their guide, but belief and assertion. If my brother thought as I do about the matter, he would laugh at the illogical idea of future punishment for present happiness.’

‘Dr. Gaston,’ said Brother Ignatius, ‘you are an unbeliever — one of those who are wise in their own conceit. I presume you deny even the immortality of the soul?’

‘I do, most emphatically. I also deny the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the infallibility of the Roman Catholic church. And I do affirm that the supernatural element of that religion — and of all religions, in fact — is based on a fable; and that it is sustained through the superstition of the people, which arises from ignorance of the laws and the phenomena of nature, which, in fact, the priests themselves are ignorant of — it is so much easier for indolent minds to say that it is God’s will, or a dispensation of Providence, than to discover and define the causes which lead to certain effects. The only true basis of religion is the moral law, founded on the “golden

rule," so called, which is much older than Christianity, and will survive it. Now, sir, I may be, to your mind, one of those who are wise in their own conceit; but you are, to my mind, one of those who are wise in their own ignorance of the real things of this life. You are, no doubt, honest enough in your way; and a fine example of the parable of the blind leading the blind. Then you speak of your church not persecuting the backslider. It is no doubt true. The lion of superstition, I am glad to say, has had its claws drawn out by modern free thought and its humane results, and it can now only roar to frighten superstitious mankind. The time is fast coming, too, I think, when, to use a Shakspearian phrase, it "will roar you as gently as a sucking dove." I think, sir, we have talked plainly to one another. My brother, though still a believer in your church, has the courage to brave its anathemas when he is satisfied he is in the right.'

'He may feel that way now,' remarked the Jesuit, with a sneer, 'but the time may come'—

'Enough, sir!' interrupted Richard. 'I will not listen to such conventional stuff. I thank you for calling on me, and should you ever honor me with another visit, I trust this subject will not be revived.'

The Brother now rose to take his leave. 'I will not,' he said, 'trespass further on your time. I will not visit you again, unless you specially request it. But I will say this at parting: If you, Richard Gaston, should ever need my advice or assistance, I hold myself in readiness, as in duty bound, to respond at any time to your call. God be with you! Good evening, doctor.'

When the Jesuit had departed, the doctor said: 'Dick, perhaps I'm prejudiced, but I have a very strong feeling

against priests of all the orthodox denominations. To my mind or feeling, I don't know which, there is something crafty and mean about them all, with, perhaps, a few exceptions, and I always feel, in dealing with them, a desire to take them up by the slack of their breeches and drop them out of a third story window.'

Richard laughed at this, and remarked that there were noble men in the priesthood.

'That may be,' said the doctor, 'but, to my mind,

'“The trail of the serpent is over them all.”'

CHAPTER XX.

ARRIVAL OF THE ROMAN GASTONS — BEATRICE AS A FREE-THINKER — MARRIAGE ACCORDING TO LAW.

The arrival of Dr. Vincent Gaston and his daughter Beatrice was an event which, though it was expected, created a flutter in the Gaston-Warden household. Miss Gaston was a daughter of sunny Italy, with dark, lustrous eyes, a wealth of raven black hair, a handsome face, with much character in it; a rich glow on her cheeks; a large, well-knit form, and magnificent bust. She looked and walked like a queen. And why shouldn't she? Her mother was of a noble Roman family, who could trace their pedigree back to the time of the Cæsars. But her branch of the family was poor, like many of the older Roman houses; but they were proud, and at first resented her mother's marriage to an alien French doctor. This lasted only for a short time, and the reconciliation was

hastened by the fact that the doctor was one of the ablest men in his profession, especially in midwifery, in which branch he was in great demand, and reaped a rich harvest, so that at sixty-two years of age he was in good circumstances.

Beatrice at once became a favorite with all the ladies, and was especially liked by Agnes. The Roman doctor, and Richard Gaston, senior, at once fraternized. It was a curious fact that, while apart they greatly resembled one another, when seen together that resemblance was not so striking. However, they were soon warm friends, and compared family pedigrees to such satisfactory results that they became fully convinced of the existence of a distant relationship between them.

Now that the Roman bride was arrived, preparations for the double wedding were at once begun.

‘I wonder,’ said Mrs. Gaston to Beatrice, that you would choose such a positive fellow as my Tom for a husband.’

‘I like him,’ said Beatrice, ‘because he is strong and positive. I detest these weak men whom a woman can order about like a servant. If I had such a man for a husband I would despise him and make a slave of him. Man is by nature the aggressive element in humanity. Woman though not the weaker, yet the more timid element; because she is protected and provided for by the man. If the man fall into the second place, the woman assumes his functions, and hence becomes the ruling element. To my mind such a condition is not natural.’

‘What do you think of Tom’s peculiar ideas of religion?’ asked Agnes.

‘I glory in them, they are so strong, so positive, and so original with him.’

‘But are you not a Catholic?’ asked Mrs. Gaston.

‘O yes—in name. It is simply a fashion with us in Rome. We do not believe. It is only the pilgrims who come to Rome who are believers. Native Catholics are nearly all free thinkers; that is, all the educated ones are.’

‘Then you do not believe in the infallibility of the Pope and all that?’ asked Agnes.

Beatrice laughed. ‘Yes,’ she said, ‘we believe in it in a material way. The Pope, as the head of the church, is infallible in the matter of the church’s business. As to saving souls—who can tell us of his success? Who knows if there are souls to save?’

‘Do you mean to say that the Roman people generally believe as you do?’ asked Mrs. Warden.

‘O yes; all the educated ones do. The ignorant are still believers—still have faith in the church, and think the Pope infallible.’

‘Are your educated people moral?’ asked Mrs. Gaston.

‘Yes, as the world goes. They are better livers, I think, than the believing class. We look for scandal and immorality in the church more than out of it.’

‘To return to our boy,’ said Mrs. Gaston. ‘Why have you chosen a doctor for a husband? You know how disturbed his time is. Tom is called up nearly every night. I should not like such a husband as that.’

‘My father is a doctor,’ replied Beatrice, ‘and what my mother could put up with I think I can, especially where love is in the case.’

‘Then you do love Tom,’ said Mrs. Gaston.

‘I adore him,’ said Beatrice. ‘He is my beau ideal of a man. He is outspoken, truthful, honest, courageous, and gentle, as such men always are. When he says a thing I know he means it. He is no diplomat, who tries to conceal what he means in ambiguous phrases, but rather tries to express himself in language that makes his meaning plain.’

‘He says he will not be married by a priest or churchman,’ said the mother. ‘How do you like that?’

‘That suits me. If we are married according to human law, it is to my mind fully sufficient. I am tired of the pomp, ceremony, and I may say the hollowness of church marriages. It often seems to me, like a sacrifice offered on the old Pagan altars, when virgins were immolated to appease the supposed wrath of some suppositious God. I want none of these church ceremonies. My marriage to my husband is altogether in the way of a mutual agreement, and concerns us principally. All we care for is the sanction of the civil law. That is simple, and it is enough.’

Agnes heard this brave declaration with pleasure, and it had a wonderfully enlivening effect on her mind. ‘I am glad to hear you talk so sensibly,’ she said.

‘Well, sister,’ returned Beatrice, ‘I trust that we may be able to illustrate in our lives and experience that church rites are not necessary to human happiness.’

‘You talk just like Tom,’ remarked Mrs. Gaston.

‘That is the way I like to talk,’ was the reply.

* * * * *

The marriage of the brothers Gaston took place one Friday evening, in the latter part of February, 1855, in the parlor of the West End mansion. No one but the

members of the family, two of Dr. Gaston's intimate associates in the Medical College, and the justice of the peace, were present. Neither brides nor grooms were apparently dressed for the occasion, the brides being plainly attired, with roses and lilies in their hair.

To the mothers—Mrs. Gaston and Mrs. Warden—it was a strange and curious scene, as compared with their own well-remembered weddings; but they did not express any disappointment, but wept in a quiet way—a kind of mutual condolence as well as mutual sympathy.

People, as a rule, are naturally conservative. They do not like new things. No matter how extravagant or how grotesque a thing may be, if it has been done before, and is familiar—has become the fashion—it is accepted without question as being all right. But any innovation—any new thing—no matter what its merits may be, is regarded with suspicion and even hostility. Why? A horse traveling along the road will be frightened by the movement of a piece of paper which is propelled by the force of the wind. For what reason is he frightened? Simply because he does not understand why a thing like that should have life or movement, not because things have not such attributes, but because he did know that the movement was produced by a simple current of air.

The justice of the peace was one of those old-time men who were brim-full of philosophy and good, old-fashioned human nature. He did not know the circumstances which induced the parties before him to choose this form of ceremony; but he knew there must be some good reason for it. He therefore thought fit to say:

‘My friends, you have called for my services to perform the marriage ceremony according to the civil

law. This is as sacred and as binding as if performed by the highest ecclesiastical authority, for it is done under the sanction of the great and glorious old state of Massachusetts.

‘Now, join hands. You, Richard Gaston, agree to take this woman for your lawful wedded wife?’

‘I do,’ was the response.

‘And you Agnes Warden, agree to take this man as your husband?’

‘I do.’

‘Then, by the virtue of the power conferred on me by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, I pronounce you man and wife.’

The same questions and similar responses were asked and given in the case of Thomas and Beatrice Gaston, and the ceremony was ended.

That was all there was to it. The thing was simple, direct, and to the point, and was good in law. To the contracting parties it was an engagement for life. To the justice, it was a generous fee of ten dollars.

There was a supper, of course, and wine among other things. Dr. Vincent Gaston and Richard Gaston, senior, drank wine and made merry, but neither the grooms nor their brides would drink any.

This was the simple marriage of the brothers Gaston, just what the plain taste of the elder liked, however much a different ceremony might have been preferred by the mothers.

Before separation that evening the elder Gaston said to his children:

‘My dear children, I have only this to say to you: In your voyage of life be true to one another. Bear with

one another's peculiarities and oddities — we all have them. Above all, understand one another, and be not over-exacting in your mutual intercourse. I am satisfied that you love one another. Never let love degenerate into jealousy, which is a mean thing, for it implies suspicion of honest good faith. No true man or woman will ever prove unfaithful to a good friend — how much less to a bosom companion, a partner and friend for life. I hope, my dear children, that your lives may be happy, and that you may live long to be useful in the world.'

Said Dr. Vincent Gaston: 'My dear young friends and children, — you will understand how much I regard my daughter's happiness when, at my age, I have come on so long a journey — and at such an inclement season — to see her well and properly settled. I will say that I am repaid this night to see her the wife of the man of her choice — not an unworthy one, I am convinced. I have nothing to add to what my kinsman has said, except to impress on you the necessity of courage and forbearance in all the trials and vexations of life. Be true to yourselves and to one another, and the problem of life presents but few difficulties which cannot be cheerfully and successfully encountered. May you be happy, is my best and only desire.'

Thus ends the romance of four young people, now entered into a partnership to continue the business of the world. They have not started out with any flourish of fashion's trumpets, but in a quiet and modest way, with the determination of making the most and the best of life. It was a proper and noble ambition of true and earnest people. Shall we not wish them success?

CHAPTER XXI.

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS LATER—EPITOME OF HAPPY LIVES.

My last chapter practically rounded out my story; but, as this is an unconventional novel, I shall take the reader into the households of the Gaston brothers in the year 1890, just thirty-five years after their marriage.

Richard Gaston, senior, and his wife had passed away peacefully some fifteen years before. Mrs. Warden survived them nearly five years. Both ladies died, as they had lived, devout Catholics.

The brothers Gaston and their good wives had been blessed with children. Richard was the father of five healthy children — three sons and two daughters — long since grown to manhood and womanhood, and all were married. Dr. Thomas Gaston's Roman wife was the mother of six children, all healthy and hearty — three sons and three daughters — two of the sons and the three daughters having been married early in life.

The comely wives of these brothers began some ten years before to count their grand-children, and the prospect is that the number will increase as the years go on, and the Gaston tribe will not lack representatives in the coming generations.

Thomas Gaston, a hale and young-looking man for sixty-five, still continued in active practice, in Boston, though his youngest son, Dr. Thomas Gaston, jr., relieved him to the extent of answering unseasonable professional calls.

Richard Gaston had prospered in business, at first in

Boston, but in 1875 had moved to one of the Rocky Mountain States, where he started in the business of miners' supplies. He had been far-seeing enough to invest in the city real estate, and this, together with his mining interests, had made him a millionaire.

The married life of the Gaston brothers had been a happy and prosperous one. No domestic cloud had dimmed their day of life. Their children, who had been carefully reared and nurtured, and taught the valuable lesson of self-dependence, were their pride and comfort.

Neither Agnes nor Beatrice ever went to church. Neither did the brothers. They lived the problem of what they both believed to be true religion in their homes and in their intercourse with the world, and both were highly respected by all who knew them.

The children of these good people had been brought up without the aid of church or Sunday school, and taught that true piety consisted in upright conduct and in the strict observance of the golden rule.

They had all received a good education, and were, by temperament, culture, and habit, fitted to be the best kind of citizens for a republic in which personal worth should count for everything.

It may be added that Dr. Gaston had not, up to three years ago, found his ideal church. He was still as radical as ever in matters of religion.

He still sighed for his 'church of the future,' as he was wont to call his pet conception, but it is doubtful if he will realize it in his lifetime. He, however, enjoyed the consolation of a feeling of personal freedom and self-ownership, which, it is safe to predict, he will retain to

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